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HINTON'S
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

IN SIX VOLUMES.


ИЗДАНИЕ

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THE
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF THE REV.

JOHN HOWARD  HINTON, M.A.

In Six Volumes.

VOLUME V.

LECTURES.

LONDON :
HOULSTON & WRIGHT, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1865.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present Volume consists mainly of the three sets of Lectures preached at Devonshire Square Chapel, London, in the three successive years 1855, 1856, and 1857; and published under the following titles—*On Acquaintance with God; On God's Government of Man; and On Redemption.*

To these have been added, in order to complete the Volume, and under the general title of *Lectures on Various Subjects*, three Discourses, of which I here introduce a brief circumstantial notice.

The first, entitled the *Ultimatum; or, What saith the Scripture?* was delivered at my own Chapel at Devonshire Square, London, on occasion of the proceedings taken by the Rev. G. C. Gorham against the Bishop of Exeter, and the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in that case. The question of which it treats is the alleged Sacramental Efficacy of Baptism.

The second and third Lectures were delivered in the progress of two Courses of Lectures arranged and conducted by the Christian Instruction Society; the former, on *The Church*, in the year 1843, and the latter, on *The Influence of Religion in promoting the Order and Happiness of the Families of the Working Classes*, in 1849.



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ON

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD:

TWELVE LECTURES.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
ASSEMBLING IN DEVONSHIRE SQUARE CHAPEL, LONDON,
THESE LECTURES,
PREPARED FOR THEIR EDIFICATION,
AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
ARE,
WITH SINCERE CHRISTIAN REGARD,
AND AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE FOR THE CANDOUR WITH
WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED A MINISTRY OF
EIGHTEEN YEARS,
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

I HAVE been accustomed to think that when authors spoke of publishing with reluctance, and only under the influence of urgent solicitation, they said what was rather decorous than true; and, if the same judgment should now be formed concerning me, it will but add one to the many instances in which our Lord's saying has been fulfilled, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Nevertheless, in my case this is strictly true. In the course of a ministry now extending over more than forty years I have preached sermons intending to publish them, but never was anything farther from my thoughts than the publication of these Lectures; and I may add to this, that I never came before the public with greater timidity. How to explain the latter part of this confession I can scarcely tell. Whether it be that I have a secret misgiving that, notwithstanding many kind expressions of approbation, the subject of the Lectures is superficially and unsatisfactorily handled, or that growing years have impressed me more deeply with a sense of the justice which ought to be done to such a theme, I will not undertake to determine; I will content myself with preferring an unfeigned request for the exercise of candour on the part of my readers.

It will, I hope, be recollected that the following pages contain, not essays, but sermons. They were delivered during the months of January, February, and March, 1855, in the course of my ordinary ministry, and the character of pulpit addresses they retain as issuing from the press. I might, as has by some eminent judges been recommended, have divested them of their pulpit form, and have converted them into essays, but I had this reason for not doing so, that it was as sermons they were found edifying, and as sermons I was requested to print them; I have, therefore,

in this particular, both exactly complied with the request presented to me, and endeavoured to retain an antecedent advantage.

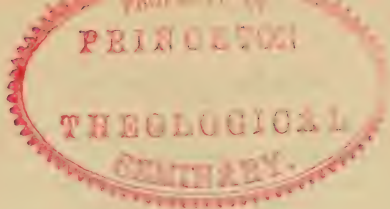
I have not, however, been able, nor if I had been able should I have been willing, to print these discourses exactly as they were delivered. I think the proper characteristics of spoken and written composition differ so materially, that, as a general rule, what may fitly be addressed to the ear cannot be fitly presented to the eye, the former admitting of a degree of amplification, repetition, and familiarity, which could never be tolerated by the latter. Had these Lectures as delivered been *verbatim* in my hands, therefore, I should have severely revised them for the press. I have had to accomplish, however, a more laborious task; namely, to write out for the press the entire discourses, from brief and fragmentary short-hand notes. Substantially, beyond doubt, they are as I preached them, and I hope that in minor respects they are not very much otherwise; but I should have been culpable indeed, if, in retracing in my study the course of thought I had gone over in the pulpit, I had not endeavoured to make them somewhat more worthy of a great subject, and of a well-informed auditory.

The Hymns appended to the several Lectures are printed because they were sung by the congregation at the conclusion of the service, but they are not printed precisely as they were sung. It would have been inexcusable to have put in type all the crudities of Saturday evening effusions, when an opportunity was afforded of amending at least a few of them.

May God's acceptance and blessing be graciously vouchsafed to an humble effort, of which I trust this at least may truly be said, that it has had in view the glory of his name!

JOHN HOWARD HINTON.

LONDON, *February* 21, 1856.



ON ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

LECTURE I.

THE IMPORTANCE AND THE SOURCES OF IT.

"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, so shall good come unto thee."—*Job* xxii. 21.

I AM not about to do battle with the atheist. Not because I have no compassion for him, nor because I am doubtful of the force of the arguments which might be adduced against him; but I content myself, in relation to that whole controversy, with one observation. The question whether there is a God has never, in this world, stood in the position of a question for argument. It has, indeed, from ancient times, been made the matter of argument, and the acuteness of modern metaphysicians, whetted in some instances by the prospect of a pecuniary recompense, which serves, perhaps, chiefly to supply periodically to a controversy which might well be suffered to expire an artificial stimulus, is still largely expended upon it; the discussion, however, seems to be as far from a final settlement as ever it was, and the world, according to all appearance, may come to an end before the most primary element of human wisdom, the existence of God, shall be conclusively established by it. We attach little value to this discussion, at once endless and objectless; and we repeat our assertion that, whether the existence of God can be argumentatively demonstrated or not, the fact has never, in this world, stood in the position of a question for argument. According to the scriptural narrative, to our first parent God personally and directly manifested himself; with him, consequently, argument of every kind, inferential or otherwise, was simply impossible. To him the existence of God was a fact as patent and unquestionable as any other,

and as a fact it has come down to his posterity, taught by father to son through all generations. Whatever be the force of argument, no man has ever been dependent upon argument for his knowledge of God's existence; every man has been taught it long before he could prove it, or even could question it. No man has either to infer it from nature, with Paley, or to reason it out *à priori*, with Clarke; it is handed down to him from his ancestors.

All but universally mankind have accepted and appropriated the tradition. Here and there, indeed, is found a recalcitrant child of Adam, who, in words at least, denies it. On what ground? He does not see sufficient evidence, he tells us, that a God exists. But can he deny or disprove *the fact*? Without the incredible assumption of a universal tradition without a basis, he cannot; and it is nothing, even if it be true, that he is not convinced by evidence, in a case in which to evidence, however conclusive, the task of convincing him was never committed.

The existence of God, then, is not a doctrine to be proved, but a fact to be accepted as an original and universal tradition. So we accept it, not as taught in the Bible (for, by a wonderful and inexplicable omission if it required such teaching, it is not taught there), but as handed down to us from the first parent of our race. No fact in the history of our kind has either a surer testimony, or a more wide and universal acceptance. The object of the course of Lectures I am now commencing is but to enlarge our acquaintance with him whom we thus know; and in the present Lecture I shall speak, first, of the IMPORTANCE of such acquaintance, and, secondly, of its SOURCES.

I. I offer, in the first place, some observations on THE IMPORTANCE of acquaintance with God.

Under this head I might not unnaturally suggest, that the character and attributes of God constitute, not merely a noble and elevating theme of human contemplation, but immeasurably the most noble and elevating theme to which the mind of man can be directed. Itself a mystery, indeed, but this property it has in common with all other objects either of thought or of perception; its invaluable peculiarity is this, that it is the mystery by which all other mysteries are solved, and by the comprehensiveness of which the multitudinous mysteries of the universe, otherwise utterly in-

scrutable, are reduced to one, while itself is more easy to be admitted than any mystery besides. Believing in God you believe one mystery, but then every other mystery can be explained because all can be resolved into this, and you have thus one mystery instead of millions; while it is easier to believe in God and in all things with him, than in anything without him. To be unacquainted with God is to be, in the moral world, in a position similar to that of a man in the physical world who should close his eyes against the sunbeams, and wrap all things in an artificial and gratuitous darkness. My object, however, is rather practical than speculative, and I pass on, therefore, to the statement of two practical grounds on which the importance of acquaintance with God may be shown to rest.

First, the importance of acquaintance with God arises out of *the general nature of our relations to him*. In the words of an apostle, he is a being "with whom we have to do," and this in respects far too important to allow us wisely to remain in ignorance of his character.

1. On the one hand, *something must be due to him*. It cannot be that we have been brought into being by his power, and made the objects of his perpetual benignity, without coming under obligations of some amount to a corresponding and grateful return. The undutiful child is, by the universal sentiment of mankind, reckoned worthy of the severest reprehension which the heart of man can cherish; and it cannot be that the heavenly Father, "in whom we live and move and have our being," and "who daily loadeth us with benefits," should, alone among parents, have no title to the reverence of his children. "Thus saith the Lord, If I, then, be a father, where is mine honour?" (Malachi i. 6.)

2. On the other hand, *something may be expected from him*. It is scarcely to be conceived that he has placed the human race on this globe merely as a theatre for their wilfulness or their amusement, for the gratification of their appetites, the indulgence of their passions, or the development of their active powers, and nothing more. This would argue a waste of resources, and something worse than waste, which it would seem impossible to ascribe to the Deity. The rational and moral powers with which mankind have so consciously been endowed, the vivid sense of right and wrong, the inextinguishable anticipation of retribution, and

the keen sensibility to praise and blame, concur to mark out man as the sure subject of some dispensation or dispensations of divine government, the issues of which cannot but be of the gravest kind. What is God? What do we owe him? And what will he do with us? are questions indubitably holding the very first place in the department of practical wisdom, and a satisfactory answer to them is certainly necessary to a well-founded peace. What rational tranquillity, indeed, can he enjoy, who, amidst whatever gratifications of time and sense, is uninformed of what clearly must be his weightiest obligations, and of those issues of this fleeting life which cannot be less than infinite and eternal? Art thou to live for ever, O man, and canst thou rest without knowing what thou owest to God, and what thou mayest expect from him?

Secondly, the importance of acquaintance with God arises out of *the particular nature of religion*.

Man is made for religion by a kind of instinctive tendency to worship and consecration, however misguided as to the deity selected for the purpose; and religion, as consisting in the worship and service of the true God, is admitted by all who seriously hold his existence to be of weighty and solemn obligation. God being the exclusive object of the religious affections, therefore, it is plain that a knowledge of him, and a knowledge of him in some degree accurate and just, lies at the foundation of these affections, and is absolutely necessary to their exercise. Without such knowledge, religion, however sedulously cultivated as to external rites, must be either formal or false.

1. Religion without knowledge may be *formal*, and so utterly vain; consisting of mere bodily exercise or lip service, of which the apostle truly says that it “profiteth little,” presenting nothing for the acceptance of the glorious Being to whom it is nominally rendered, and exerting no beneficial influence on the party by whom it is performed.

2. Religion without knowledge may be *false*, wholly or in part, and so pernicious. For the influence of religious worship depends entirely on the character of the deity to whom it is paid, the deity and the worshipper having in this respect a mutual action. Man most readily and profoundly worships the deity most like himself, and thus in return he becomes by his worship more like the deity whose resem-

blance to himself attracted it. It is thus with idolatry, which in a thousand forms allures the sensual and polluted heart, and which in every form makes the heart it inflames only the more polluted and sensual: the worship of the true God, in like manner, leads to a growing resemblance of him in his moral excellence and purity; but it can do so, of course, only in proportion as he is correctly known.

II. From these obvious remarks demonstrating the necessity of acquaintance with God, I proceed without further enlargement to the consideration of its SOURCES.

No question can be more important for us—nor is it without its difficulty—than that which now arises; namely, from what sources may a just and adequate knowledge of God be derived? I say, a knowledge of God just and adequate—not perfect, for I know that “none can find out God unto perfection;” but just so far as it extends, and adequate to the practical demands of human life—neither false nor feeble. Whence shall we derive it?

Five sources of divine knowledge have been indicated: 1, personal insight; 2, tradition; 3, manifestation; 4, analogy; and, 5, revelation. I shall notice these in the order in which I have named them.

1. A claim has been set up by a modern writer to know God by *personal insight*, or by direct intuition. It needs nothing, he assures us, but to think closely, in order to see directly into the mind of God, and to know what he is with as much precision and certainty as attends our knowledge of other subjects. This is a scheme which I cannot pretend here fully to discuss, but on which I make in passing the following remarks.

(1). I remark, then, that, even if this were so, and for the sake of argument admitting what is so confidently asserted, it would be of no use in a world in which so many persons are not willing, and so many more are not able, to think closely. Such a doctrine might possibly serve for the few whose minds have had the benefit of enlarged and early culture, and whose powers of speculative thought have, by long training, acquired both accuracy and vigour; but to the majority of the human race its application would appear to be simply impracticable. What, for example, is to be said of children and young persons, not too young for religious obligations and responsibilities, but far too young for a trust-

worthy insight into God? What is to be said for the untutored population of even Christian lands, immersed in a darkness "which may be felt"? Or what, finally, for the crowds who lie buried amidst the shadows of a multiform paganism, and who are assuredly as incapable of a direct insight into God as they are of mastering Kant's philosophy, or Newton's Principia? Yet the whole value of this scheme consists in its being universally applicable, and capable of being used by every man for himself; since those who cannot make a personal use of it are not only excluded from its benefit, but constitute an exception which vitiates the entire project.

(2). Again, still for the sake of argument admitting the scheme propounded, we may ask, of what use can a method be which is variable in its results? If, indeed, there were any considerable number of persons professing to have a direct insight into God telling us that they had each seen the same thing, and portraying the same character as presented to their penetrating vision, there might be some attention due to so wonderful a fact, especially if these modern seers had arisen in different countries, and grown up under the influence of different systems. But neither this, nor anything like it, is the fact. As yet the pretenders to such vision are very few, and we do not know that any two of them have had the same view of God, while we do know that some of them materially differ. And what could the result be if the millions of the earth's population, or the inhabitants of a single country, were to make experiments with this new instrument of speculation, but that they should see, not the brightness and glory of one common sun, but the kaleidoscopic varieties of his refracted light? A small contribution, certainly, to the illumination of the world.

(3). In truth, it may be laid down as a principle not to be overthrown, that God, in his essential nature and attributes, is not subject to direct contemplation. There are other beings besides himself, and far inferior to him in glory, who are not so. Human beings are not so. We can defy the shrewdest philosopher that ever lived to acquire any direct insight into the nature of our faculties or character. Of the former he may judge from analogy by his own consciousness, and the latter he may infer from its outward expression, but

no more; the interior is a holy place into which no human eye can penetrate. And if it be so with man, how much more so with God! Assuredly, of him we can know with confidence only what we are, in some manner, told of him.

(4). Nor is it difficult to understand what those do see who fancy that they have a direct insight into God. While imagining that they are looking into the divine nature, they are in reality but looking into their own, and what they see is not God, but themselves. How should it be otherwise, since there is absolutely nothing else for them to see? The inquiry they are prosecuting is not what God is, but what, according to their best notions of God, they may expect him to be; which best notions, accordingly, when carefully formed, they group together into an imaginary being whom they call God, and fancy they have seen him. It is thus that, upon this system, we should have more gods than ever filled the temples, or were named in the fables, of paganism—as many, in a word, as there are persons in the world, and nowhere among them all the God that made the earth and the heavens.

2. The pretence of personal insight failing, we ask whether God can be satisfactorily known by *tradition*?

It is by tradition, certainly, that our acquaintance with God actually comes to us. As a parent naturally teaches to his child what he himself knows or believes, so above all things he teaches to his child what he knows or believes of God; and this knowledge is imbibed during the period and with the simplicity of infancy, at once without suspicion and without inquiry. It is in this way—that is, by instruction delivered down from father to son—that we all acquire our first conceptions of God. If we trace this traditional instruction back to its fountain, we shall undoubtedly find it pure and authentic. God himself is its origin: and, had there been found means of securing it from admixture or corruption, it might have served for all generations of men the purpose it so well served for the first. Proofs are but too abundant, however, that man's traditional knowledge of God has awfully degenerated. The corruption of man's heart speedily affected his conceptions of the Deity, and caused him to turn in aversion from holy and spiritual to gross and polluted ideas. He required, in fact, a god like himself, and after his own heart he made to himself "lords many and

gods many." "Professing themselves to be wise," says the apostle, men "became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Romans i. 22, 23). And more than this, they made their gods vicious that they might have vindicators and patrons of their vices; and, "as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind" (verse 28). Thus fearfully corrupted, tradition is, of course, useless as an introduction to acquaintance with God. Of the existence of God it still supplies a proof, since there is no accounting for a tradition so universal but on the supposition of its truth; but it teaches with correctness no more. The true aspect of the Deity it has lost, and it presents us in its stead with only caricature, distortion, and falsehood.

3. God, however, has effected a *manifestation* of himself by his works, and from these, perhaps, his character may be satisfactorily learned.

Now we cannot question for a moment either the fact or the value of such manifestation. That something may thus be learned of God, and something both just and important, is indubitable. Hear, for example, an apostle: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead" (Romans i. 20). Hear the first master of ancient song:—

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard;
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world."

Psalm xix. 1-4.

Hear, also, a gifted seer of the olden time:—

"Lift up your eyes on high,
Behold, who hath created these things,
That bringeth out their host by number:
He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might,
For that he is strong in power not one faileth."

Isaiah xl. 26.

Hear, finally, the sweet singer of Israel, as he casts his eye over God's providential administration:—

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works!
 In wisdom hast thou made them all:
 The earth is full of thy riches.
 So is this great and wide sea,
 Wherein are creeping things innumerable,
 Both small and great beasts.
 There go the ships;
 There is that leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein.
 These all wait upon thee,
 That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.
 That thou givest them they gather:
 Thou openest thine hand and they are filled with good.
 Thou hidest thy face and they are troubled;
 Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, and they are created:
 Thou renewest the face of the earth."

Psalm civ. 24-30.

But the instruction conveyed by the works and the providence of God, although of great value, and undoubtedly correct as far as it goes, does not go far enough to answer man's need, if justly appreciated. There are, indeed, persons who, in a kind of sentimentalism which they mistake for religion, profess to think it enough, and pretend at once to satisfy themselves with what can be seen of God in the verdant fields and the starry sky, and to think that he will be satisfied with a dreamy worship rendered to him in this temple of nature. We have no sympathy with this idle romance. To us, at least, and to our guidance and satisfaction, more is necessary; and this for two reasons.

(1). The knowledge imparted by God's works of nature and providence is *too limited*. We want to know more than either or both of these instructors can teach us, and this, not for the gratification of a speculative curiosity, but for purposes most practical and immediate. What are the nature and conditions of God's moral government? What are the position and prospects of those who have violated his law, and incurred its penalties? Is there hope of mercy, and what is the method of its exercise? These are questions which man's anxious heart and guilty conscience propound with a vehemence not to be repressed; but they are questions to which neither nature nor providence afford an answer. Can these mute oracles, dumb when they should speak the loudest, be adequate instructors for man?

(2). Again, the indications supplied by the works and ways of God are *too conflicting*. For the aspects of nature

and providence are not uniform, nor do they deliver a testimony one and simple. Nor are they only variable and equivocal, they are in some cases contradictory. The fertilizing shower and the refreshing breeze tell of divine benignity; but what message is borne by the destructive deluge and the fierce tornado? The endless forms of animal life are lovely expressions of the delight in happiness felt by their Author; but what, then, is indicated by death, which is demonstrated to have existed long anterior to sin, and by the internecine strife rendered inevitable in the animal world by the formation of creatures of prey? Is it divine benevolence that directs the course of the eagle, the shark, or the tiger, when in pursuit respectively of their victims? Or, to turn from nature to providence, do the lovely features of an assumed benevolent Deity suffer no distortion when we attempt to trace them in a world so full, through successive ages, of physical and moral evil? Are the woes and the crimes of men, with all the malignity of the one and all the bitterness of the other, fitting streams to issue from a fountain of love? If we assign the introduction of sin as accounting for these fearful phenomena, what is to account for the introduction of sin itself, as permitted by a benevolent being, with a foresight of the desolation and ruin it would entail?

We do not say these things to cast even a momentary doubt on the goodness of the Creator, which we believe to be unquestionable; but to show that the evidence supplied by the natural and providential world is conflicting, and therefore unsatisfactory, itself requiring an interpreter, as does the greater mystery to which it relates. We know that various efforts have been made to solve the difficulty which thus presents itself, from the ancient philosophical speculation of a twofold divinity, the one malevolent and the other benign, to the simpler supposition that, on the whole, good overbalances evil; but these efforts have been attended with only partial success. To every reflective observer the difficulty still remains; not irremovable, it is true, by light from another quarter, but—and this is all we affirm—requiring light from another quarter in order to remove it.

4. From whence, then, may this further light be derived? May we look from the limited and conflicting testimony of nature and providence to the intellectual and rational being

whom God has placed in this world, as supplying an *analogy* by which we may form a judgment of himself?

That there is an analogy between the human nature and the divine cannot be doubted. God is emphatically said to have created man in his own likeness; and it is clear that, to whatever extent man is in the likeness of God, to the same extent also God must be in the likeness of man. Such a resemblance, indeed, is implied in the current language respecting God employed by the sacred writers, whose whole style may be said to be based on this idea. Thus God is said to see, to hear, to speak; to know, to choose, to love, to hate; to be wise, to be just, to be righteous, to be merciful: all which terms, and many others of the same class, are primarily applicable to ourselves, and are from ourselves transferred to the Divine Being, a sufficient analogy being supposed. Did no such analogy exist, it can scarcely be believed that inspired men would have been led to employ a phraseology in that case so much adapted to mislead. Further, the existence of an analogy of some extent between God and man is absolutely necessary to our acquiring any knowledge of God at all, since without it there is no possibility of knowing him. Nor, indeed, is it possible but by help of analogy to know any other being than ourselves. The creatures around us are more or less like ourselves, and in as far as they are so we readily become acquainted with them; but where this resemblance ceases our knowledge also ceases, and if inquiry is made as to the reason why its progress is arrested, it is enough to say that we have arrived at something to which we find in ourselves no analogy. The same link which thus connects us with the lower, doubtless connects us also with the higher order of beings, and ultimately with the highest and origin of all.

The analogy between God and man, however, the existence of which is undoubted, and which may safely be regarded as adapted to impart to us some just ideas of our Maker, has appropriate, and, indeed, narrow, limits, which require to be carefully observed. We should grievously err, for example, if we should be led by it to ascribe to the Divine Being bodily members, senses, and appetites. We should err no less if we were to ascribe to him the instincts which characterize animal life; such as the instinct of self-defence, for instance, known in the human race under the name of resentment.

Nor should we allow ourselves to conceive of God as the subject of intellectual processes or mental affections exactly like our own, or as experiencing either the emotional excitement of the one, or the cerebral activity of the other. In fine, we should exclude from our notions of him the idiosyncrasies which lie at the basis of constitutional differences among men, and contribute so much to give to every one a character peculiarly his own. And to all these limitations must be added, of course, the repudiation of everything which possesses the nature of either physical or moral defect. Thus guarded, and jealously guarded, analogy may teach us something of God; but only something still, and this with little authority, and with constant liability to error. It is, in truth, to no small extent that by the influence of analogy some of our most important conceptions of God and his ways are modified. To take only a single example. Some persons have a constitutional sense of justice so strong, that it evidently facilitates their accepting the most awful views of the future punishment of the ungodly; while others have so warm a sentiment of benevolence, that they more tenaciously cling to the belief of the final extinction of evil, both physical and moral. It is evident, therefore, that, as man is no absolute model of God, so he is ill-fitted to judge positively of the degree in which his Maker is like himself.

5. It is needful, then, that we appeal to the only remaining source from which a satisfactory knowledge of God can be derived—*revelation*. God himself must tell us what he is, if ever we are to know it truly; in his voice all will recognize a wisdom in which they may confide, and an authority to which they must submit. That such a process is “possible with God” cannot for a moment be doubted; it may also be deemed in the highest degree probable, since, in the defectiveness of all other sources of this important and indispensable knowledge, it is most necessary; and we are thankful to know that it is actually realized in the blessed book which now lies before us. Let us reverently listen to its instructions.

The revelation of God’s character may assume three forms.

First, *the historical*. Such, for example, is the Old Testament; an exhibition, in a series of facts constituting a portion of the divine administration of the world, of the character of the Ruler. There we behold what, more directly or

indirectly, he has done, and we may with ease and certainty gather from it what he is.

Secondly, with the historical revelation of God is combined *the doctrinal*. In this form direct instruction in the knowledge of God is given to us in magnificent passages of Holy Writ almost innumerable, of which a few instances may be presented to you.

Listen to an ancient bard:—

“O Lord my God, thou art very great,
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment,
Thou stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.
He layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters,
He maketh the clouds his chariot,
He walketh upon the wings of the wind.
He maketh his angels spirits,
His ministers a flaming fire.”

Psalm civ. 1-4.

Let the voice of the Lord himself instruct you, while he proclaims himself to his servant Moses:—“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus xxxiv. 6). Similar, but more explicit, is the evangelical testimony: “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16).

You will all recollect of how great number, variety, and beauty, are passages of this kind in the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testaments. It is impossible to overrate their value, or with too much reverence to study them. Together, they constitute a portrait of unequalled and unapproachable excellence, and one which could have been delineated only by the finger of God himself.

Thirdly, a *personal* revelation of God is added to the historical and the doctrinal. We have this in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture presents him to us as God incarnate, and his name is called Immanuel, “which is, being interpreted, God with us.” In this respect our blessed Lord occupies a position of the greatest importance, and supplies what might otherwise have proved a painful deficiency. “No man hath seen God at any time,” but “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John i. 18). “The brightness of the Father’s glory,

and the express image" of the divine person (Hebrews i. 3) is he, and his life affords us an exhibition of the divine character at once incomparably vivid, and absolutely just. "He that hath seen me," said our Lord, "hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). An unspeakable facility for advancing our acquaintance with God is thus supplied to us. The divine is presented to us in the human, and a being who is perfectly like ourselves becomes to us the interpreter of one who is imperfectly so. The actual likeness of God to ourselves, indeed, is thus assured to us: for, if there were no kindred between the human and the divine, they could not thus harmoniously have been blended into a single human person; but the likeness is here not marred—either by sin, by infirmity, or by constitutional peculiarity. The countenance, the language, and the life are man's, but they exhibit a portrait of undefaced divinity. The pure, the gentle, the wise, the true, are here in their unsullied beauty, and their infinite perfection.

Such is the discovery which this holy volume unfolds to us. Here we become acquainted with God, and here alone. How unspeakable is its value! How indispensable! How satisfactory!

Of the character of God as revealed in the Bible I shall, of course, say nothing now, as we are about to enter at large on the successive illustration of its principal aspects. May wisdom be given us for the profitable pursuit of so important and so interesting a study, that "so good may come unto us." I observe only, in conclusion, that, with all its fulness, God is only partially revealed, even in the Bible. As seen in his ways he is wrapped in mystery. As the subject of dogmatical instruction he is but an ideal being to be realized by a heart which responds to the idea. As seen in his Son he shines through a veil of flesh, the deadening effect of which was necessary to mitigate the ardour of too intense a brightness. It awaits us in a still higher sense to "see God." At present our knowledge is imperfect. And the imperfection of our knowledge reminds us that it is intended, not for the gratification of the intellect, but for the guidance of reason, the culture of the heart, and the direction of the life. For this the knowledge given us is enough: vain if, half enlightened, it leaves us quarrelling with the mysteries which the light, perhaps, has only rendered more awful; but

adequate and invaluable if we will be guided by it to the mildly-radiant footstool of his mercy, in preparation for our access to the refulgent splendours of his throne.

LECTURE II.

GOD AN INFINITE SPIRIT.

“God is a spirit.”—*John* iv. 24.

“Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”—*Jeremiah* xxiii. 24.

HAVING, in our former Lecture, ascertained the source from which all just acquaintance with God must be derived, we now proceed to ask of the Holy Oracles the all-important question which occupies us—What is God?

I introduce this subject by some general remarks on the nature and limits of human knowledge.

It has required some of the latest efforts of philosophers to master some of the earliest lessons of philosophy. It is a comparatively recent conviction of those who seek after wisdom that we cannot know all things, that the essences of things are altogether beyond our cognizance, and that we can learn nothing of any object but by its properties. This point of wisdom, however, is reached at last, and the seats of science now teach what an humbler spirit and a simpler mode of investigation might have discovered long ago. Let us avail ourselves of the elementary wisdom thus presented to us.

We know only the properties of things. Objects are with or without feeling, with or without colour, with or without smell, and so forth through a long list of properties; and this is all we know. Within such narrow limits is human knowledge, with all its aspirations, circumscribed. What, then, can we do with the primary elements thus ascertained; and how far can we go, either in arranging them into kindred groups, or in drawing from them warrantable conclusions?

First, from properties we infer substance, properties having, as it would seem, no capability of independent existence, but requiring a basis in which they may be said to reside. Thus

colour, sweetness, and feeling, abstractly considered, are mere conceptions of the mind; they exist only as something is coloured, or sweet, or sensitive. This something we call a substance, or subsisting thing.

Secondly, properties are to each other either more like or more unlike; and upon comparison they are found to be capable of arrangement into two large groups, or classes, broadly distinguished from one another, while nearly related among themselves. These, for example, are nearly akin—form, colour, odour, taste, hardness, solidity, gravity. These, again, are closely akin—thought, feeling, memory, will. And the two groups are, without question, widely different the one from the other.

Thirdly, so widely different, indeed, are these two groups of properties the one from the other, that we naturally conceive an equal difference in the substances which they respectively characterize. We consequently infer the existence of substances of two kinds; on the one hand, an inert and unconscious substance, more or less heavy, solid, or odorous, and on the other, a conscious, intelligent, and active substance, which thinks, feels, and wills.

Fourthly, these two substances we call respectively matter and spirit; matter being the substance which possesses gravity, solidity, and other like properties; and spirit being the substance which is capable of thinking, feeling, and willing.

With this amount of elementary knowledge, let us approach the declaration of our Lord respecting the nature of God. The declaration is brief and simple: "God is a spirit." But, brief and simple as this declaration is, it stands out with great prominence in the Bible. It is, perhaps, singular and unique; the only instance in which anything is told us *directly* of the divine subsistence. And this is late in the history of the inspired volume; at once a summary of much antecedent knowledge, and a splendid light for the coming ages. It is also a declaration made by the highest authority, the Son of God himself, who must personally know so well the subject of which he was speaking.

This important and gracious declaration, what does it teach us?

We shall best answer this question, perhaps, by looking at the language of our Lord in three lights—the negative, the positive, and the comparative.

I. Considered **NEGATIVELY**, the declaration before us *separates the Divine Being from all material objects*. God being a spirit, he is, consequently, not matter.

This aspect of the declaration is by no means unimportant, for there has been in mankind a strong and deplorable tendency to materialize their conceptions of deity. It is thus that the apostle traces the progress of human corruption, when men "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." He tells us that they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Romans i. 23). In the vast and endless labyrinth of pagan idolatry, there is not an object in the heavens, and there is scarcely one upon earth, that has not been deified; while the most imaginative mythological fictions have, for the most part if not universally, assumed a substantive form, either by the magical skill of the sculptor, or by the humbler manipulations of the carpenter or the potter. And the worship (if by this name it may be called) often proceeded on the supposition that the deities were hungry or thirsty, and needed such supplies as their devotees could present to them, from the most simple food to drink-offerings of blood. All this culpable folly and blindness is rebuked by the four words of our text, "God is a spirit." And the same truth was presented to the first philosophers of the world, amidst the pride and glory of the ancient temples, when the apostle of the Gentiles and the messenger of Christianity stood on Mars' Hill, and said,—“Ye men of Athens! . . . God, who made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might find him, though he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device” (Acts xvii. 24–29).

II. Considered POSITIVELY, the declaration before us *assigns to the Divine Being a specific nature, or subsistence.* "God is a spirit."

Now, although we do not know what a spirit is in its essence, we know what the properties are of that unknown essence which we have agreed to call a spirit: and we may fairly assume that our Lord intended to use the word in the same sense as ourselves—it was used in that age in the same sense as in the present—since otherwise the use of it would have been, not only vain, but delusive; not only could it have conveyed no just meaning, it must in all probability have conveyed a false one. When Christ, then, said, "God is a spirit," we properly understand him to have said that God is a conscious, intelligent, emotional, and active substance, or being.

The declaration thus understood suggests three remarks.

First: *To a certain extent it is plain*, and it makes our conception of God easy. I say *to a certain extent* it is plain, for I have no intention whatever to intimate that it makes everything plain, or removes all mystery. Even if God were exactly like ourselves (which he is not), still his being would be a mystery, since our own is so, and is as truly removed from a perfect comprehension as his. To a certain extent, however, the declaration is plain, because to a certain extent our conception of a spirit is plain, the properties we ascribe to it being not only cognizable by us, but actually familiar to us, both as exhibited by others, and as existing in ourselves. Such, then, as we ourselves are, and such as other beings around us are, in as far as we and they are spirits, such also is God; for "God is a spirit."

There is something in this declaration which seems graciously and sufficiently to meet the difficulty so universally felt, and sometimes so painfully felt, in conceiving of God. When we attempt it, our thoughts are apt, perhaps, to rest in a loose and unimpressive vagueness; or, if they assume a more distinct shape, to suggest some venerable human form. The latter, certainly, is wholly inadmissible, and the tendency to it should not be indulged. On the other hand, the want of sight ought not to be equivalent to a want of definite conception. It is true, we ordinarily *see* our fellow-creatures, but we do not always do so, and there are some well known and dearly beloved by us, probably, whom we have never

seen. Nor do we need to see them in order to enable us to apprehend their character, to cherish affection towards them, or to hold communion with them. All these things we do towards them as spirits—our spirits towards their spirits—and, however closely connected these exercises may be with visible and tangible qualities, these are but accidents, and not at all essential to the process. To know and to commune with a spirit not embodied would require only another class of accidents, not any essential change. We may conceive of God, then, as of an unseen person, or, separating from our conception of him the possibility of being seen, as an invisible person; yet as a person—a conscious, intelligent, emotional and active being, so far like ourselves or like any other human being, and so apt to our acquaintance and regard. I do not know that we could desire God to be brought nearer to us, or to be made more level to our apprehension than this.

Secondly: The declaration before us *lays a fit basis for our transactions with God*. The apostle teaches us that with him “we have to do,” and it would seem that our transactions with him, however solemn, are attended with every proper facility. We are spirits; so is God. We have converse one with another, and one from another we receive influences either pleasurable or painful; why, then, may we not have communion with God, and experience joy or sorrow according to his regards? That our spirits reside in habitations of flesh, and operate and are operated on through organs of sense, is true; but these are mere accidental circumstances, which do not avail to separate us as spirits one from another, and which still less can be held available to separate us from our Creator-spirit, God. Through a similar organization, and by a similar instrumentality, he has already held communication with us in the mission of his Son; the constitution of whose person, indeed, as blending at once so intimately and so harmoniously the natures human and divine, is a convincing demonstration of the wonderful similarity which fundamentally subsists between them. And, if the fact that God is a spirit renders it thus easy to conceive of communion with him, what an exalted idea is it adapted to give us of the dignity and excellency of such communion! What must our own nature be, which is so near to God’s and so apt to fellowship with his!

Thirdly: The declaration before us *removes all that is formal and external from our transactions with God*. It is with a practical application of this kind that it stands immediately connected. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The Lord said this to a woman of Samaria, who had been accustomed to think that the acceptableness of worship consisted in its being offered in "this mountain," as many others had deemed of Jerusalem. "Woman, believe me," said Jesus, "the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; . . . but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John iv. 21, 23). How many have there been in every age, how many are there even in this, to need such instruction! Alas! man will give everything to his Maker but his heart. He will bow the knee, though it be on lacerating stones; he will utter words of prayer, though it deprive him of his customary sleep; he will observe seasons and days, though at a sacrifice of his worldly interest; he will decorate his dwelling with festive garlands, and give large alms to the poor, with scarcely an estimate of the cost; but inward reverence and love, repentance for sin and faith in Christ, where are these? Where are these? They are wanting, and God must accept the formalities so sedulously executed as a substitute and an apology for them. Ah! formalist, dream not of so satisfactory an issue. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." God "seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel xvi. 7). He has looked on your heart while you have little thought of it, and perhaps you are scarcely conscious of what he has seen there; but the levity, the selfishness, the worldliness, the hypocrisy—these are the things which he has noticed with displeasure, while your prayers have been to him only unmeaning and revolting forms. How forcibly may the burning language of Jehovah by the ancient prophet be applied to the formalism of modern times! "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot

away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting" (Isaiah i. 12, 13).

How seriously should we all learn the lesson that, in every religious exercise, "God looketh on the heart"! Why should he not do so? It is as open to his observation, as "naked to his eyes," with all its depths and all its secrets, as the external service. In prayer it is not so much to the words he listens, as to the inaudible breathings which ought to constitute their life; beneath the aspect of penitence he feels for the inward sorrow; and words of trust and love do but mock him if they fail to represent the genuine affections. Ah! with such a Being how carefully should we deal! How little can it profit us to be of those of whom he shall say, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew xv. 8).

III. Considered COMPARATIVELY, the declaration before us *requires supplementary information*, since it leaves undetermined the rank (so to speak) which God holds among spiritual beings. Although God is a spirit, not every spirit is God; and, as there are within our cognizance spirits of various degrees, so, to a proper knowledge of God, it is necessary to ascertain the peculiarities which distinguish him.

I shall not, of course, at present, even glance at all these peculiarities; they will supply appropriate themes for our future discourses; but I shall now direct your attention to one of them, which, while magnificent in itself, constitutes the basis of several others, and, in truth, may be said to shed its own glory on them all. It is indicated by the second of the passages which I presented to you at the commencement of the Lecture: "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."

Of spirits generally, and, indeed, with a single exception, universally, it is a certain feature that they are finite, or bounded by limits, and for the most part by very narrow ones. I may refer to those of animals and men, which are scarcely to be conceived as, in any case, larger than the bodies in which they reside. In this respect a grand peculiarity attaches to the Divine Being. He has no bounds. Other spirits pass to and fro through the earth and the heavens; he fills them. In a single word, God is an infinite spirit.

Let us try, in such measure as we may, to realize this description. And, in doing so, we shall naturally observe the negative character of the expression employed, *infinite*. The first syllable of this word, *in*, has the force of a negation, as though the word itself were *non-finite*, *not finite*. The same peculiarity characterizes the cognate term boundless—*bound-less*, or without bounds; nor, by the utmost ingenuity of human language, can any term of a different kind be found for the purpose of conveying the idea intended. As language is the instrument of human thought, we safely infer from this that we are not capable of forming any positive conception of the infinite. We can conceive of the bounds assigned to a portion of space—say to a circle; and we can in imagination push back those bounds by successive impulses, so that the circle shall become larger and larger without end; but still it will be only a circle, girt rigidly by its appropriate and necessary boundary as before. It is thus, then, that we make our approach, and our nearest approach, to the conception of the infinite, by supposing the bounds of the finite to be farther and farther removed, till practically they shall cease to exist. This is not the infinite, let us observe, for that has no bounds, but it is the conception of ours which approaches nearest to the infinite, and the conception which, for want of one more adequate, we must apply to God. He fills “heaven and earth;” that is, the entire universe, which, in popular language, is comprehended in these two parts, the earth and the heavens.

Let us now advance another step. God fills universal space. In what sense does he fill it? Now there are various ways in which this phrase might be employed. A person might be said to fill by his presence a space—an apartment, for example—in which he could know everything; or to fill by his energy a space—a sphere of commercial activity, for example—in which he presided over everything; or to fill by his ministerial agency a space—a country, for example—over which he exercised despotic rule: but neither of these ideas would satisfy us as to the infinity of God. He not only sees all things, animates all things, and governs all things; *he is everywhere* by a universal diffusion of his actual nature. As a human spirit pervades a human body in every part, so the Divine Spirit pervades the universe in every part. That conscious, intelligent, emotional, active being is infinite.

I have hitherto endeavoured to reduce this thought to its simplest form, in order that I might, as far as possible, facilitate your conception of it; but we will now contemplate it in a different light, and see what wonderful views of God and the universe it opens to us.

We have thus presented to us, in the first place, *a magnificent idea of God.*

Magnitude is one of the elements, although not the only one, according to which we appreciate objects. And it would seem too natural not to be highly probable that, in the ascending orders of spiritual beings of which the Scriptures indicate the existence, an increase of magnitude may accompany and denote the successive augmentations of intellectual and physical power. In some such sense, perhaps, we may understand the words of the Psalmist, when he exclaims in holy rapture—

“Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that *excel in strength*,
That do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.”
Psalm ciii. 20.

And in some such sense the seer of the Apocalypse may be understood, when he speaks of the “mighty” angels by whom the acts of the dramatic vision were accomplished. In this respect how amazingly does God stand out in superiority to all other beings! He fills the heaven and earth which his ministers traverse; and, doubtless with a proportionate vigour, a divine intensity, he occupies universal space. It is around his footstool that “all his hosts” assemble; and, vast as may be the expansion of spiritual being exemplified in their shining ranks, assuredly none can be compared with the unapproachable Infinite. The mightiest angels tracking their wondrous way through the paths of space, would be but as motes in the sunbeam in the presence of the boundless One.

In the second place, we obtain *a conception only less magnificent of the universe.* If such be God, what is the universe? It is unmeasured space, with unnumbered worlds, floating like isles of light in the dark abyss, but leaving deep gulphs between, and a margin of measureless ocean on every side. There is, however, no void. The boundless space is filled with God. Everywhere, not only in its thickly-peopled regions, but in its dreariest solitudes, is that Infinite Spirit; conscious, intelligent, emotional, active being everywhere.

With such life the entire universe is absolutely instinct—instinct with God. Well said the child of whom we have all heard, when one said to him, “I will give you an orange if you will tell me where God is,” “I will give you two oranges if you will tell me where he is not.” And as justly, as sweetly, sang the Psalmist in the olden time.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there;
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall guide me.”

Psalm cxxxix. 7-10.

But *where* is the universe? Strange as the question may seem, it is susceptible of an answer. The universe is *in God*. To all its multitude of worlds and their inhabitants may be applied that which the apostle affirms of the human race, “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts xvi. 28). His vast circumference is the sphere within which all worlds describe their orbits, and his capacious bosom the home in which they repose. Locally all must be in him, for there is no place besides. What a wonderful peculiarity of the Divine Being opens on us here! It would seem that other spirits so occupy space as to appropriate it, and, with the exception of the material embodiment which may be appropriate to them, to exclude from it all other occupants; but God is a spirit so attenuated and refined that objects without end can exist within him, somewhat after the manner of the planets in the celestial ether in which astronomers have supposed them to revolve.

The created universe, then, may be regarded (if the licence of such an expression may be allowed me) as the interior of the Deity. What an interior! Gaze upon it. See the intricate movements incessantly executed in the starry maze, and the giddy dance of worlds in countless throng. See the various physical powers, cohesion, gravitation, electricity, and loving affinities, each pursuing its object, and effecting its purpose, as directed by an unerring wisdom. See the innumerable tribes of living things, minute and magnificent, with their keen sensibilities and pressing wants, in complicated and ceaseless activity. See, finally, the vast population

of intelligent and rational beings, with excited passions and resolute energies, some of them choosing their wilful way as if bent on dethroning the great monarch seated in holy rule above them. And all this is *in God*; expressing and representing the tranquil and serene activity of the Infinite One!

By an abuse of the idea which is now presented to us, some have formed the conception that all things are God, and they affirm the converse of the proposition, that God is all things, or nothing distinctively, but only another name for the universe. Such is the speculation called Pantheism, which ancient philosophers of great celebrity have transmitted to us, and with which some modern philosophers are not yet ashamed to amuse themselves. We acknowledge the speculation to be a glittering one, and to be far more attractive, especially to men of imaginative minds, than any other form of heathen theology; but it is a speculation merely, and neither true nor possible. It is certainly not the doctrine of the apostle. He teaches not that we are God, but that we exist in God, which is obviously, not only a different, but a contrary sentiment. Nor, upon the pantheistic system, does anything but a physical and an animal universe seem possible; for the entire universe of morals is annihilated by it at a single blow. If God is the universe, he is, of course, in the most absolute sense, the doer of all things, not only good, but evil; at one and the same time performing deeds the most benign and the most malignant, and indulging passions the most noble and the most base; while the government he pretends to exercise can be nothing but a mere pretence, in which he enacts the farce of making some beings fancy themselves blamable for what he only does, and perpetrates the mockery of seeming to punish others when he can be only punishing himself. Poor philosophy! thou art sadly at a loss without a guide.

In the third place, *God's infinity has a relation to his other attributes*. See what a basis it constitutes for his glory, both in his person and in his position.

1. There are some personal attributes of God which may be regarded as springing directly out of his infinity.

If God is infinite, he must be one and alone. There is no place for another, the entire universe being occupied by himself. The absolute unity of God is thus established on a necessary basis, and the possibility of another deity wholly

excluded. Were a second deity supposed to exist, he must be conceived of as requiring a local habitation as well as a name; but there is no possibility of assigning to him a locality, because the infinity of the divine nature would exclude him from all localities, and deny to him even a home. If such a region could be imagined, the imagination would immediately have the effect of breaking up our conception of God's infinity; since we must then suppose him limited, at least in one direction, in order to make room for his fellow. In that case, indeed, God might have to look both on his fellow and his equal, and there might be no force in the emphatic appeal made so long ago by the mouth of the prophet:—

“To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal,
And compare me, that we may be like?”

Isaiah xlv. 5.

Happily, the God we revere is far removed from such an indignity.

Glorious ONE! Every other being may have his fellow, perhaps is one of multitudes, his equals; thou only art alone.

If God is infinite, he must be sufficient to himself, since there is no source exterior to himself from which aid could be derived. Creatures, it is plain, could lend him nothing, since they, on the contrary, derive their all from him; and besides these there is none other. What a glorious attribute! Self-sufficiency! How unlike all besides, who have but what is given them, dependent pensioners on the bounty of a richer hand, while He is the deep and ever-flowing fountain of his own excellences, vast and inexhaustible.

If God is infinite, he must be the Author of all else that exists, and sufficient to all. God, as infinite, existing alone, if anything else exists it must be by his power and pleasure, no other account of its origin being possible. And, as everything else that exists must “have its being in him,” or exist within the extent of his own nature, it is clear that all resources must be supplied to them out of his fulness alone. Helpless indeed are creatures that have no help in him. God thus appears to us as the Creator and Preserver of the universe of beings, who both made and “upholds all things by the word of his power.” Who could sustain the pressure of a world? But all worlds lean upon him, and he bears the

weight without weariness. When the creation is weak and languisheth, he beareth up the pillars thereof.

What a marvellous idea do these observations give us of the intensity, as well as the diffusion, of the divine nature! It is not that a conscious, intelligent, emotional, and active being of ordinary capacity is diffused through infinity—a sort of dilution of the divinity—but that each and all of his attributes are raised to an energy proportionate to their diffusion. It must be so. A God incompetent were no God at all. A feeble deity might almost be supposed to shrink from the majesty of the infinite void, and to hide his incompetency among the secrets of the abyss.

2. The infinity of God has an interesting relation also to his position.

As one and alone, God necessarily stands at the head of the universe he has made; supreme alike over its physical elements and its providential administration, and sole source alike of well-being and of authority. In this position infinity is necessary to him. He could not occupy such a position without it. In imagination destroy his infinity, and reduce him within bounds however vast, and you leave a region in which it is conceivable that some portion of his creation may be equally beyond his help and his knowledge. Were it not better never to have become the Father of so many worlds, than to have run the risk, to say nothing of the certainty, of abandoning some of them to so desolate an orphanage?

But, universal Sustainer, Benefactor, and Governor, as God is, infinity is adequate to him. Since everywhere he is, and everywhere is what he is, there is no spot in universal space where he cannot do all that may be required of him; no spot where want can be without a supply, or sorrow without consolation; no spot where guilt can screen itself from detection, or crime be exempt from arrest; no spot where justice cannot be executed, and truth cannot triumph. The great attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, are indicated here. He *can* reign. It is well. Let him be universal King who alone is able to occupy the throne!

Thus have we spent a few moments in learning our first lesson of God; and a lesson more grand or impressive it is scarcely possible for us to have studied. But amidst the speculative we must not forget the practical, nor amidst the

vast the minute. This is the God with whom *we* have to do; the conscious, intelligent, emotional, and active being who has given us the powers we possess, and who holds us completely within his own grasp as to the use we make of them. What a solemn thought it should be to each of us—to me, dear hearers, and to you—that *we* live, and move, and have our being in God! How instantly and how thoroughly he knows us! How perfect must be his control over us! How vain the effort to escape, either from his eye or from his hand! Ought we not to be concerned to please him? Can we be wisely indifferent to his anger? We fear some *men*; how much more the infinite God! “Acquaint thyself with him,” sinner, and “be at peace”! Be thankful that he proposes peace to you, and by us entreats you to be reconciled to him through Jesus Christ, whom he sent to be the Saviour of the world.

Finally, how interesting and glorious a thought does our subject supply to the friends and children of God. O, my brethren, is this he whom you can call your Father? Is this he whom you are permitted to adore, and privileged to love? How sweetly you can rest in adoration and self-abasement before him! What a place of repose is his bosom to you, a holy rest of peace and quietness! And how sure your happiness! How can you be separated from him? He is everywhere around you—nay, he is always within you. You live in him as well as with him, the ever-present and the ever-kind. Ah! happy residence “in the secret place of the Most High, and under the shadow of the Almighty.” How safely you may go whithersoever he leads you, since you can never go where he is not, or where he shall be less to you than an infinite, and therefore all-sufficient, God. Learn to make his glory yours, and to live as those should live who have such a friend.

HYMN.

MAJESTIC Spirit! who dost fill
 Unbounded space with consciousness,
 And animate with power and will
 The infinite,—we sing thy praise.

One and alone, Great God, thou art,
 Nor place for aught beside is found;
 In thee all creatures act their part,
 And stars describe their ceaseless round.

What all-sustaining energy,
 And ever-present rule are thine!
 O let thy wrath ne'er fall on me;
 Thy gracious love and care be mine!

LECTURE III.

GOD A NECESSARY BEING.

"Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."—*Exodus* iii. 14.

WE reverently take another step this evening in the great inquiry on which we have entered. Of the only competent authority we have once asked, What is God? and we have received a most explicit and instructive answer. God is a spirit, and a spirit infinite, filling heaven and earth. May we know more of him? May we again ask the question, What is God? May we put this question in a fuller form and ask, What is his name? There was once a man who did so. It was the wandering fugitive in the land of Midian, whom God took from tending the flocks of Jethro, and made him the deliverer of Israel, his people. On being invested with this great and important mission, Moses not unnaturally endeavoured to prepare himself on the point. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"

The question of Moses, doubtless, was asked as well for his own satisfaction, as for that of the Hebrew nation. The response to it was complex. The first part of it bears a repulsive aspect: "And God said unto Moses, I am that I am;" as much as to say, "I will afford you no explanation." Yet God immediately proceeds to answer the question more fully; and in two forms: first by an assertion of his essential glory, and next by a declaration of his covenant relation.

"And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of

Israel, The LORD God of your fathers" or more properly, Jehovah (substantially, a repetition of the name I AM), "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (ver. 12-15).

At humble distance, but not forbidden, we follow the example thus set us by the ancient prophet, and we derive our present instruction from the former part of the answer with which he was favoured. "And the Lord said, I AM: this is my name for ever."

The name on this occasion taken for himself by God, what was its force? It had undoubtedly, in the first place, an especial application to the circumstances in which it was announced, and it was eminently appropriate as placing the God of Israel in strong contrast with the gods of the Egyptians, of whom it might be emphatically said that they *were not*; but, with respect to the universe at large, its meaning might appear to be small. In common with God himself this also exists; and no superiority over other objects is indicated by this phrase, unless it is understood as denoting some peculiar mode of existence which they do not share. There can be no doubt but it must be so understood: it sets up a claim for God to a higher kind of existence than theirs, and higher in this respect, that it is an existence absolute and necessary.

When we thus speak of the existence of God as a necessary fact, or of God himself as a necessary being, it is, of course, incumbent on us in the outset clearly to define the meaning of the term; more especially since the word necessary is employed in a variety of ways, all of them but one inapplicable to the subject before us.

1. That is sometimes said to be necessary which, for a certain object in view, is requisite, and cannot be dispensed with.

2. That is sometimes said to be necessary which, under certain moral or legal considerations, is obligatory, and may not be refused.

3. That is sometimes said to be necessary which, by the exercise of physical force, is compelled, and cannot be resisted.

4. That is sometimes said to be necessary which, as in

voluntary beings, occurs with certainty, though not compelled.

5. That is sometimes said to be necessary which, standing apart from all influences, is not contingent; but is, not because it happens to be, or because anything has produced it, but because existence absolute is a property of its nature.

It is in this last sense, and in this sense alone, that we speak, when we say that the existence of God is necessary, or that God is a necessary Being. Our meaning is that the existence of God is not contingent, but absolute. He not only does exist, he cannot but exist.

I. Let us now see, in the first place, FROM WHAT SOURCES THIS CONCEPTION OF GOD DEVELOPS ITSELF.

I observe, then, in the first place, that the idea of necessary existence *is inseparable from every conception of God by which the human mind can be satisfied.*

We may naturally throw all things the existence of which we either know or can conceive of into two cognate assemblages, characterized by this great distinguishing feature, that one portion of them might not have existed—their non-existence is at least conceivable—while the other portion of them must have existed, the non-existence of them being altogether inconceivable by us. Now, no object of the former class—that is to say, no object of which we can conceive as, at any time or under any circumstances, not existing—can satisfy the conception which the human mind forms of Deity. A being who exists to-day, but began to exist yesterday, or may be extinct to-morrow, and who, therefore, might not even have existed to-day, cannot be God to man. Nor was it ever so, I imagine, amidst the perishable forms of ancient idolatry, nor, amidst the equally perishable forms of modern idolatry, is it so now; the various and multiplied idols being, in both cases, but so many formal manifestations of a divinity in its own nature superior to them, and, therefore, separable from them, though operating through them. Thus the Greeks acknowledged a Fate which was superior to Jupiter, and the Indian of to-day, through his most degraded superstitions, looks to “the Great Spirit.” In truth, a being who may or may not have existed to-day, and may or may not exist to-morrow, is a being too closely resembling ourselves, and partaking too largely of our physical weaknesses, to become to us an object of either

reverence or trust. More or less distinctly in all cases, and more distinctly according to the measure of light and culture enjoyed, in thinking of God man's heart clings to the conception of absolute and necessary being.

I observe, in the second place, that the idea of necessary existence *is developed out of that of an infinite being*. That God is a being infinite is a truth to which our attention was directed in the preceding Lecture. Now, whatever is infinite is necessary also. To suppose it contingent, or, in other words, to suppose that it might or might not have been, is to suppose that there are causes out of itself, since it is only by causes out of itself that the fact of its existence could have been effected, in which case it can no longer be conceived of as infinite. The idea of its possessing all space is not only inclusive, but exclusive also, and does not permit the supposition of any other entity, by which the existence of an infinite object could have been either originated or prevented. Since God is infinite, therefore, his being is also necessary. No cause can exist but within himself: such causes, however, are part of himself, and their existence implies the antecedent existence of God in whom they are. Had he not first existed, no other being could have existed, whence it is obvious that there is no being by whom, or cause by which, the question of God's existence could have been in the slightest degree affected.

I observe, in the third place, that the conception of God's necessary being is likewise *developed out of the fact of the existence of the universe*. The necessary existence of some being must be supposed, for, if some being had not necessarily existed, there never could have been any other being, since the spontaneous starting into existence of any being is quite inconceivable, as an effect without a cause. A large number of beings, however, do exist; and, it being necessary to suppose a cause for the existence of them, our minds go back through the entire series of beings which have a cause till we find one which has not a cause, or through the entire series of second causes till we arrive at the first cause, which is, of course, uncaused. In other words, we infer an uncaused author of a caused universe; that is, a being whose existence is necessary, and not contingent. Now, it is to God that we look up as the Author of the universe, the Creator of all things: and we thus attach to him the idea of existence not contingent, but necessary.

II. Having thus endeavoured to explain the sense in which we speak of God as a necessary being, and to trace the sources from whence the idea of necessary being is developed, let us, in the second place, attempt to REALIZE THE CONCEPTION THUS BROUGHT BEFORE US.

And, first, *in what broad and striking contrast does it place God with all other beings!* Look forth on the vast universe, with its countless glories! See the millions of animated and inanimate beings that crowd the earth, and throng your steps as you walk upon it! Lift up your eyes to the vaulted heaven, either as it glows with solar fire, or sparkles with sidereal gems, which tell of millions of worlds besides, each nestling its hidden wonders within that speck of impenetrable light! Think of the spiritual beings whom the eye cannot see nor the imagination trace, but whom we know to fill with their shining hosts the highest heaven, and to wing their wondrous way to the remotest worlds! Not one of these has a necessary being. There is not one of them, however glorious, but you may say of it, "This might not have been." This rock, this plant, this animal, this globe, this sun, this seraph—might not have been. Its place might have been a blank, or have been occupied with a being of a different kind. One solitary exception stands out, in conspicuous glory, to this otherwise universal contingency. It is God. Of him none can say that he might not have been. His existence is necessary; he cannot but be. We cannot conceive his place to be either vacant, or occupied by another. "I AM," saith the Lord; "this is my name for ever."

Secondly, *what a wonderful thing it is that there should be such a necessity* as that which we are now contemplating! It is wonderful that there should be a necessity for any existence at all. It is possible to imagine universal space as an infinite void, absolutely unoccupied with being. Why has it not been so? Whence is the necessity of being? And, above all, whence is the necessity for the existence of a Being so glorious? Whence the necessity of a Being who is a spirit, a conscious, intelligent, emotional, and active Being, rendering that which would have been otherwise void instinct with knowledge, feeling, will, and power—with life in its highest form, and with possibilities of life in forms innumerable? Whence the necessity of a Being who is a spirit infinite, not having local habitation or aptitude of

motion, but spreading through all space his own excellency? Whence the necessity, ask, for the existence of such a Being? Why not another? An inferior? A worse? A malign? Deep questions! leading to the brink of an abyss which angels cannot fathom. Let us reverently retire from it, thankful indeed, while wrapt in wonder, that the existence of a Being so glorious has no element of contingency, but is as necessary as it is felicitous and blessed.

III. Let us now, in the third place, EXAMINE THE RELATION WHICH THE CONCEPTION OF GOD'S NECESSARY EXISTENCE HAS TO HIS OTHER ATTRIBUTES. In it are to be found the roots of some of his specific perfections.

First, since God's being is necessary *he is eternal*. What necessarily is is always, and alike in the past, present, and future. If ever there was a period when it was not, or if ever there shall arrive a period when it will not be, then clearly its existence is not necessary. God, then, whose being is necessary, is also eternal. His existence is without beginning and without end. He thus appears to bear the same relation to time, or rather to duration—for time is only duration measured by succession—that, in our former Lecture, we found him to bear to space. As he fills boundless space, so he occupies measureless duration, and is thus infinite, if I may use the terms, at once in breadth and in length. As we reach not the limits of the space he fills if we travel to the utmost verge of the eastern or the western sky, so neither do we arrive at the term of his existence if we trace back time to the period when the first movement of the universe set the hands of its horologe in motion, or go forward in its course until its rapid and restless wing shall become weary of its flight.

Time, with all its changes, the future and the past, is included within the measure of his being; but time is to the being of God only as a moment, since, in its utmost length, it bears no appreciable proportion to eternity. What proportion, indeed, can finite duration bear to duration infinite?

The topic which we have now before us, grand in itself, is often dwelt upon in Holy Writ. The apostle speaks of God as "The King eternal" (1 Tim. i. 17); and the seer of the Apocalypse describes him, with a simple majesty, as he "who is, and who was, and who is to come" (Rev. i. 4).

This is, in truth, a prerogative that none can share with

him. It is characteristic of all other beings to find for their lives a commencement and a close. Look at the living tribes which populate the earth. A few hours ago they began to breathe, and when a few hours are gone their breath will depart from their nostrils, and they will return to their dust. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten," but they are "swifter than a weaver's shuttle," and man soon disappears from the theatre of his aspirations and his toils. "Man dieth, and where is he?" Of his race one "generation passeth away, and another cometh," but the race itself also is vanishing; it lately had its first member, and will quickly have its last. We talk, indeed, of the antiquity of the world, and think how hoary with age are its gray mountain-tops: alas! the foundations thereof were laid but as yesterday, and to-day they tremble to their overthrow. But of Jehovah the Psalmist thus speaks:—

"Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
From everlasting to everlasting thou art God."

Psalm xc. 2.

The heavens, indeed, are older than the earth, and show in glittering records what must be deemed the true antiquity of the universe. And a majestic antiquity it is. How grand a thing it is for time to have been able to measure the countless ages through which those venerable globes have been describing a celestial course, to which not only science, but imagination, fails to assign a commencement! But this had a beginning, too, as the present position of its relative elements demonstrates, and it will also have an end.

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of thy hands.
They shall perish, but thou shalt endure,
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment,
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed;
But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

Psalm cii. 25-27.

And so, while God endures, shall all things perish when the hour of dissolution arrives which God has decreed for them, save only those which he has appointed to exist for ever, thus stamping them with a partial resemblance to his own eternity.

What inexpressible majesty is here! How fitted is such a Being to be the Protector and the Refuge of the feeble and

the helpless ! While he “sees our ages waste,” he calls us to the covert of his wings. “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place,” says the Psalmist, “in all generations.” Yea, and generations to come shall not be wanting of his compassion.

Secondly, since God’s being is necessary *he is self-existent*. For, if not self-existent, his existence must depend upon another, in which case his being is contingent, and not necessary. Further, whatever is eternal must be self-existent; if it were not so, its existence must have been derived from another, which supposes another to have existed before it, in which case it is not eternal. Being eternal, or existing from the beginning, it goes back beyond the existence of any possible producing power, and, consequently, if it exists, it must exist of itself.

In this respect, likewise, the eternal God stands out a solitary peculiarity in the universe. All other beings, not excepting the most exalted, have derived their existence from another, whom they must own as their Creator, and from whom they “borrow leave to be.” They have thus but a secondary existence, and express only the conceptions and the pleasure of him from whose will they have sprung. In striking contrast with this is God. His being is not derived from another, either by gift of bounty, or by act of power. Amidst a multitude of created things he stands the single uncreated. Nothing more is to be said of him than that **HE** is. All creatures have a father, and are as children about his feet. Far otherwise is God himself. Who is his father? It is usually felt that we express a condition of destitution and calamity when we speak of one as fatherless, but here is emphatically the fatherless Being, the Orphan of the universe; and his orphanage is not his calamity, but his glory.

Thirdly, since God’s being is necessary *he is immutable*. Whatever exists necessarily must be always what it is, since it exists by a power which must be conceived to be always in operation, and to produce at all times its full effect. In objects as we observe them, changes take place by force of causes either external or internal, but no causes of change of either class are assignable to God. Nor could change of any kind be reconcilable with the necessity of his being. If he undergo any change at all, it follows that so far his being is not necessary—so far he might not have been; and if to

some extent his being is not necessary, his being to a further extent may not be necessary; there can be no knowing what limit to assign to this liability to change, and no security that it shall not affect his entire existence.

Mutability, in truth, is inseparably connected with contingency. That which may be changed evidently might not have been what it is, as it may not continue to be so. God's necessary existence, consequently, stamps upon him the character of immutability.

Of course, it will be understood that, in affirming the unchangeableness of God's nature, I am quite aware of his changes of operation. Undoubtedly, the origination of the created universe constituted a vast change; and the administration of the universe, providential and moral, consists of a series of changes, determined by the will of God, and effectuated by his power. But, amidst all these changes, God himself changes not. His physical and moral attributes continue always what they were, and will continue always what they have been.

Again in how magnificent a contrast does this attribute of the Divine Being place him with all besides! Change is the law of the universe. Motion is everywhere; everywhere decay and reproduction. The life of the animated world is essentially incessant change, and that of the intellectual and spiritual world is no less so. The solid earth rests not a moment—as shifting as the flying cloud; while the vast globes which stud the heavens are urged onward in courses in which they may ask vainly for repose. Nor does change avoid the immediate presence of the Eternal. Around the very footsteps of his throne, and amidst its highest splendours, all is changing still—all but himself! Hear his voice: "I am Jehovah: I change not" (Mal. iii. 6). Marvellous Being! Thou changest not; and yet art the cause of unceasing and universal change.

And how vast a felicity is this for a universe which changes so incessantly! Here at last is its rest, at once the source of its energy and its point of repose; the centre of the circle in which each portion finds its orbit, and the common centre of the varying circles described by all.

Of what infinite moment it is that a Being so unchangeable should be also a Being excellent! Ah! had the fundamental necessity of the universe stamped immutability on

the impure, the malevolent, the foolish, or the feeble, how immeasurable had been the calamity! A stereotyped form of iniquity, imbecility, and impotence! Warmly indeed may all other beings congratulate themselves that the Unchangeable is also the Good.

It is characteristic of immutability to exclude progress, for progress is change, although it may be change for the better. There thus attaches to God a remarkable peculiarity. It is the law of organic and intellectual being to commence at a point of imperfect development, and to attain gradually a more advanced condition; as the seed is perfected in the tree, and the infant in the man. For intelligent beings it is a great happiness to be susceptible of change, since an opening is thus presented for moving from evil to good, or for advance from good to better; and there is none who could wisely wish to have such hope of change annihilated. Even from the most elevated condition of which we can conceive the prospect of enlarging knowledge and happiness must not be taken away. With God all is different. From the very necessity of his being incapable of change, he is also without possibility of improvement; progress is denied to him, and he may be compared to a person born without hope, destined to be unalterably what he is at the earliest moment of his being. Who can endure to be thus impressed with the stamp of immutability? It is God alone, whose excellence is eternally perfect, and cannot be enhanced, that can bear the imprint. Let the whole universe rejoice in it! Why should they wish in him a change?

As the immutability of God prohibits progress, so also it forbids decay. It is not only that, being eternal, he cannot die, but that, being unchangeable, he cannot grow old. How speedily comes old age on us, with its thousand infirmities, and touching signs of decaying faculties! But God is always young, and can never pass his prime. He is ever in immortal vigour, not because it is given him, but because it is his own. "Who only," says Paul, "hath immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 16).

What an inestimable qualification is God's immutability for the multitudinous beings, always feeble and often sorrowful, who have to make their refuge under the shadow of his wings! Ah, blessed refuge! what would the helpless and the broken-hearted do without it? And what would they do

if it were not always what it is? If that almighty power were at any time to be smitten with feebleness, or even to lose any assignable portion of its strength? If that loving heart were at any time to become cold and insensible to human woe? Alas! weeping children of men, that would be a dreadful time for you! O be thankful that there is no reason to apprehend its arrival! It is for your consolation, indeed, that God himself rejoices in his immutability: for thus saith the Lord, "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). Rest, therefore, rest; ages to come shall rest with equal security.

I have thus endeavoured to open to you our second lesson in the knowledge of God. We first learned that he is a spirit, and thus in some measure like ourselves and comprehensible by us. We no sooner come to dwell on the attributes which distinguish him, however, than we find him removed to an incalculable distance from us, as a Being at once infinite and necessary. Image of ourselves, but magnified without measure! Let us, however, try to group together the attributes of which we obtain such grand and interesting glimpses. God is a SPIRIT—a Being conscious, intelligent, emotional, and active. God is a spirit INFINITE, and thus diffuses his conscious, intelligent, emotional, and active being through all space; self-sustained, and the Author and Sustainer of all besides; the omnipresent, the omniscient, and the omnipotent One. And God, we now learn, is a Being NECESSARY; thus adding to the glorious attributes already enumerated those of self-existence, eternity, and immutability. How this glorious nature is built up before us! How its splendour grows upon our vision! Bright glimmerings these, but only glimmerings, of his majesty.

I ask, in application, must we not be impressed with a sense of our utter littleness and nothingness before him? What are we—what are all creatures—in his sight, but less than nothing and vanity? Who would not fear him? Who that will reflect *can* regard him without a reverential awe? Who will provoke him to anger? Or, if this have been thoughtlessly, or even more culpably done, who among transgressors will not seek a refuge from his wrath? The anger of *men* often assumes forms which we dread; how much more should we stand in awe of *his* terrors? Sinner, this God is angry with *thee*: wilt thou not flee from the wrath to come?

Finally, how blessed must be the possession of such a friend! O! to look up to so glorious a Being, and to call him MINE! Yet this is the privilege of all who are at peace with him through Christ Jesus. What he is, and all that he is, he is to those that love him, their portion and their God. Canst thou rise, O child of God, to the height of thy exalted privilege, and in the blaze of so much glory, exclaim, My God, I know thee, and adore?

HYMN.

WHAT is thy name, mysterious One,
Whose omnipresent life we own?
Say, while we ask on bended knee,
What thine essential glories be.

“Hearken, O mortals, to the name
You seek and I pronounce—I AM:
To me alone the name belongs,
Repeat it with most reverent tongues.”

Absolute Being! We adore
The eternal, uncreated, power:
Alone unchangeable; besides
All ebbs and flows, like ceaseless tides.

How blest the infinite should be,
Filled of necessity with Thee!
With Thee, whence creatures all derive
Their hope to exist, their power to live.

LECTURE IV.

GOD A SOCIAL UNITY.

“The secret of the Lord.”—*Psalm* xxv. 14.

UNDER the guidance of this holy book, we have found God to be a necessary and infinite Spirit. It is much to have been introduced so far into the wonders of his being; but may we be permitted to penetrate further? Or will our continued inquisitiveness expose us to rebuke? If we ask to see more of God, will a voice from heaven reply, “Wherefore dost thou ask, seeing it is secret?” No, my brethren; “the

secret of the Lord" shall be revealed to reverent inquirers, and a view of what may be called the interior mysteries of his nature shall not be denied to us. Let us solemnly behold them.

The disclosure now to be made to us may be expressed in these words: GOD IS A SOCIAL UNITY. I shall take up in succession the two parts of which this proposition consists.

I. In the first place, the proposition before us affirms that God is a UNITY, or, in other words, that there is but one God.

1. This truth has already cursorily presented itself to us, as derived by inference from the infinity of God; for of things infinite it is plain there can be but one, since that which fills all space leaves no room for the existence of another.

2. This truth, which is thus included among our primary conceptions of God, is also expressly taught, and prominently exhibited, in the sacred Scriptures. Such, for example, was the testimony of Moses when, on God's behalf, he spoke to the Hebrew nation, and distinguished the God who claimed a covenant relation to them from the multitudinous deities of their Egyptian taskmasters: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One LORD" (Deut. vi. 4). Similar language is continually in the lips of the ancient leaders of sacred song. Take the following as a specimen:—

"O sing unto the LORD a new song,
Sing unto the LORD all the earth.
Sing unto the LORD, bless his name,
Show forth his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
His wonders among all people.
For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised,
He is to be feared above all gods;
For all the gods of the nations are idols,
But the LORD made the heavens."

Psalm xcvi. 1-5.

In the same spirit the pretensions of the strange gods by whom the affections of the Israelites were so culpably entangled, are thus indignantly rebuked by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah:—

"Thus saith the LORD, Is there a god beside me?
Yea, there is no god; I know not any."

Isaiah xlv. 8.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is none else.”

Isaiah xlv. 22.

The doctrine of the New Testament corresponds perfectly in this respect with that of the Old. Thus to the Scribe who asked of the Teacher sent from God, “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus replied, “The first of all the commandments is, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord’” (Mark xii. 29); thus quoting the words of Moses, and making them his own. “We know,” says Paul, “that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Cor. viii. 4). And with a message of similar import the whole band of apostles and their coadjutors went into the midst of the pagan world, and its crowds of gods. “We preach unto you,” said the apostle of the Gentiles, “that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts xiv. 15).

3. The declaration that there is only one God, thus variously repeated in all parts of Holy Writ, is of great importance, not merely in relation to our views of God—to a just conception of whom this idea is, of course, essential—but in relation also to the actual tendencies of the human mind. For, in point of fact, a strong tendency has manifested itself among mankind towards the belief and worship of a plurality of gods. The conception of God losing its original majesty and force, men suffered their idea of his glory to diminish, so that one God would no longer answer the purpose for which a deity was required; and hence, in order to account for different aspects and conditions of the world, they imagined “lords many and gods many;” one for the production of good, another for the production of evil; one for this country, another for that; some for the hills, others for the plains; some to preside over domestic, and others to manage public, affairs. To this tendency the whole of revelation is directly hostile. Its great lesson is, “There is one God, and there is none other but he” (Mark xii. 32); and he is accordingly exhibited as possessing an eternal and inexhaustible sufficiency, not only for himself, but for the universe besides. To testify against the practical results of this tendency was one design with which God separated his people Israel from all the other nations of the earth, and to

testify against it still is one object of Christianity. The voice of the former dispensation protested against the diversion to many gods of the reverence due exclusively to the one; the voice of the latter invites the estranged nations home to the footstool of the forgotten and neglected Father.

The truth that there is but one God is also of great practical importance to ourselves, inasmuch as our conception of God affects so largely all the exercises of personal religion. Between more gods than one, if such were our conception, respect must necessarily be divided; and it might be said that in such a case there could be no true religion at all, since to no one being could be rendered that which is due to God. Such divided worship would also be essentially idolatrous, since it would be the rendering to others what could be due to God alone. This consideration is highly worthy of our practical regard.

II. We advert now to the second part of the proposition which I have laid down. God, I have said, is a SOCIAL unity.

The idea which I mean to convey by this expression is, that, while there is only one God, his nature is not simple but complex, and contains an element of diversity by means of which a social character is given to it.

Let us put this subject distinctly before us. God is an eternal, infinite Spirit. Is this eternal, infinite spirit simple, or complex? That is the question.

In handling this question, I shall, in the first place, seek for the evidence by which it may be solved; and afterwards offer some general observations on the conclusion which may be arrived at.

In the first place, I seek for *the evidence by which the question may be solved*. In doing so, I deal exclusively with the testimony of Scripture; for the doctrine of the Trinity is undoubtedly a doctrine of pure revelation, undiscoverable, doubtless, by any other light, and unentitled to credence on any other authority.

1. Now, we cannot become familiar with the phraseology of Scripture, without perceiving that *its general language is not framed on the conception of an absolute simplicity in the divine nature*.

Thus, at the very commencement of the Bible, we have the fact that the word employed for God is, in the Hebrew,

in the plural number, the verb being generally in the singular. In the first verse of Genesis, for example, we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" a passage more literally translated as follows: "In the beginning *Gods* he created the heavens and the earth." This phraseology is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, and in one instance it is manifest to the English reader. I refer to the passage in which Nebuchadnezzar says to Daniel, "The spirit of *the holy gods* is in thee" (Daniel iv. 9).

If I am asked whether I mean to found on these passages the doctrine of the Trinity, I answer certainly not; but neither, on the other hand, can I allow phraseology so singular and so marked to be set down as utterly without meaning. And, if it must be assumed to mean something, it is fair to ask what it means. That the sacred writers either intended to teach the existence of more gods than one, or carelessly employed language which conveyed such an idea, is hardly to be supposed; it is, indeed, a supposition sufficiently guarded against by their general testimony on the one hand, and, on the other, by the prevalent use of a singular verb in connexion with the plural noun. Now, if the mode employed do not convey the idea of a plurality of gods, it must intimate something respecting the nature of the one God. And what in his nature can authorize him to be spoken of as a plural noun—to be called Gods? What I have said about it (and I think justly said) is, that the language is not framed on a conception of the absolute simplicity of the divine nature; it is at least congruous with a conception of its complexity.

2. In further examining the phraseology of Holy Writ, we find that *divine titles, attributes, and works are ascribed to more persons than one*. I mention a few examples:—

"By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens."
Job xxvi. 13.

"The LORD God and his Spirit hath sent me."
Isaiah xlviii. 16.

Here two persons appear to be spoken of as equally divine, "the LORD God and his Spirit," to the latter of whom also a divine work is attributed.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah,

Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
 Every valley shall be exalted,
 And every mountain and hill shall be made low;
 And the crooked shall be made straight,
 And the rough places plain:
 And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed,
 And all flesh shall see it together,
 For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."

Isaiah xl. 3-5.

In this passage it is clear beyond controversy that there are two persons who are called Jehovah, nor can it be at all doubtful that this name of divine prerogative is here applied to our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings,
 Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
 Serve Jehovah with fear,
 And rejoice with trembling.
 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
 And ye perish from the way
 When his wrath is kindled but a little.
 Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Psalms ii. 10-12.

Here is another clear instance in which a person is called Jehovah who is at the same time called "the Son" of God.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
 And the government shall be upon his shoulder;
 And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
 The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."
 Isaiah ix. 6.

In this citation there is evidently a second person, the Lord Jesus Christ, emphatically designated as "the mighty God."

In the evangelical narratives of the New Testament, in many passages with which we are familiar, our Lord takes to himself the name of "the Son," while to another he gives the name of "the Father;" and he at once assigns divinity to the Father and claims it for himself.

Upon one occasion our Lord seems expressly to have taken to himself a name pre-eminently distinctive of a divine glory. He said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews to him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I AM." That this was an

assumption of the name by which God made himself known to Moses appears evident from the narrative now; and that it was so understood by our Lord's immediate hearers is plain from the result—"Then took they up stones to stone him" (John viii. 56-59).

Hearken to his language on another occasion: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus said unto them, Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but because thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John x. 27-33). Had the charge here brought against Jesus been false, it would have been imperative on him, as on any honest man, immediately to have denied it.

In this connexion I may not withhold from you the sublime and irrefragable passage with which the Gospel of John opens. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John i. 1-4). Here are undeniably two persons spoken of as divine, and divine works are unhesitatingly ascribed to both.

In the latter portion of this Gospel, our Lord develops the work and office of the Holy Spirit in terms which clearly indicate his divinity also. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 16, 17). "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," verse 26. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come" (chap. xvi. 13). This language cannot have been framed on any conception of the Holy Spirit short of his divine personality.

3. At length we have, not merely the separate ascription of divine attributes and operations to more persons than one, but an *express and formal grouping of three elements into a divine unity*.

This is first developed in the formula prescribed by our Lord for the administration of baptism: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. xxviii. 19). It is quite impossible to imagine that, in so solemn a formula, and one holding so conspicuous a place among the institutions of Christianity in every region and through every age, such a group should have been formed of dissimilar and incongruous elements. Every consideration demanded that the name into which believers were baptized should be, not partially, but wholly divine, the assumption of it being an act of consecration—that is, of worship—of the most solemn kind. As presenting a group of elements, each of them divine and all of them combined in the unity of God, the baptismal formula is at once simple and grand; but, if regarded as blending with a first divine element a second which is human, and a third which is wholly impersonal—a God, a man, and an emanation—the formula must charitably be deemed nonsense, in order to redeem it from the imputation of blasphemy.

The conception of God which forms the basis of the baptismal formula is at the foundation also of the current language of the apostles, and is embodied by Paul in an apostolical benediction bearing a striking resemblance to it: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). In this, as in the former case, it is a matter of insuperable difficulty to separate divinity from two of the group so intimately associated in an act of prayer, and to attach it only to the third, which is not here even placed in the first position.

In fine, we have not only these practical illustrations of a threefold complexity in the divine nature, but a dogmatical statement of it: "For there are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one" (1 John v. 7). I am aware of the objection raised by some biblical critics against this passage as absent from some manuscripts, and as, consequently, con-

stituting a doubtful part of the genuine text; but, without entering into this controversy—which would be unsuitable here—I may make, in passing, two observations: the first is, that critics of equal celebrity are found on both sides of it; and the second is, that so large a number of manuscripts remain uncollated, that, while it is impossible to arrive positively at an affirmative opinion, it is unsafe to form a negative one. The verse may yet be found in a great majority of manuscripts, and antecedently to a full examination no one can affirm that it will not be so.

Assuming the genuineness of this passage—which, however, is of no special importance in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, since it is only one of many witnesses whose testimony is clear and satisfactory without it—I may be permitted to remark one of its peculiarities, its lateness in the scriptural canon. The effect of its occurring almost at the end of the Bible is this; it causes the divine Trinity to be exhibited in the Scriptures rather as a fact than as a doctrine, somewhat after the manner of the existence of God himself, which, though implied in every page of the Holy Word, is nowhere doctrinally taught in it. Into this mode of exhibition some of the ancient manifestations of the divinity recorded in the Old Testament are doubtless resolvable; manifestations which appear to have been made by the assumption of human form by the second person of the Trinity, in accordance with the name given to him in the Old Testament Scriptures, “the Messenger (or angel) of the covenant.”

We have thus examined, at as much length as is compatible with the limits of a pulpit discourse, and at sufficient length for the purpose of candid inquiry, the current language of Holy Writ, from the uniform tenour of which it appears to be plain that the divine nature is not simple, but complex; that it is characterized by an element of diversity of a three-fold aspect; and that this diversity exhibits itself to us under the personal forms of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The only possible way to avoid this conclusion is, either to get rid of the terms employed, which cannot be done, since they are at once too numerous and too extensively incorporated with the entire Scriptures; or to understand them in some other meaning—which has, indeed, been often attempted, but with very indifferent success. As a

type of this class of biblical interpreters may be cited Emmanuel Swedenborg, who, denying any distinction in the divine nature, affirms God to be a simple being differently manifested, sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, sometimes as the Holy Spirit, thus presenting to our faith a mere trinity of names—an interpretation at once too forced and too trivial to deserve a serious refutation. The safest and the easiest of all modes is, in a childlike spirit of teachableness and humility, to receive the testimony of God concerning himself in the natural and unconstrained meaning of the words in which it is given.

There have been some persons, indeed, who have told us that, in their view, the doctrine of the Trinity was so intrinsically impossible and absurd that no testimony, not even that of the Bible, could convince them of it; and that, if they thought the Bible really contained it, they should rather reject the book than believe the doctrine. This, however, is evidently a matter of taste, and about matters of taste it is proverbially useless to dispute. The class to which these men of superlative wisdom belong is already formed. They are akin to those who sent Galileo to the Inquisition because he discovered the motion of the earth, and refused credit to Harvey when he demonstrated the circulation of the blood. They will believe no fact on its proper evidence. Their own opinion outweighs all the evidence in the world. Let them take their own course. The Bible is not the less true because some men reject it. The case is simply this: they entertain certain opinions, and will receive the Bible if it teaches them; we, on the contrary, receive the Bible as the oracle of truth, and with it accept all the doctrines it contains.

Having thus ascertained, on the only competent authority, the fact of a complexity in the divine nature, or the existence of a divine Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I proceed, in the second place, to *offer on it some general observations.*

1. And, first, in the simplest and most direct manner *I meet the charge that it is mysterious and unintelligible.*

The question is asked, Can you explain it? To this question I answer frankly that I cannot. It is, of course, a mystery. I ask, however, in return, Why should this be a stumbling block to the faith of a man who lives in a world of mysteries? Is any one going to proceed on the principle

of believing nothing more than he can explain? Certainty and mystery are blended in every object around us, a necessity of believing with an impossibility of explaining. You believe in the production of effects; but you will be the first of philosophers if you can explain the process of causation. You believe in the acquisition of knowledge, but the acutest of metaphysicians are still disputing about the mode of its acquirement.

You believe in the existence of organic life, but impenetrable mystery still hangs over both its origin and its processes. You believe in your own identity, but you will ponder long before you can explain the mode in which it is preserved. Mystery? Yes, verily; it is, as I said, a world of mysteries. Every object is full of them—air, earth, and sky; every plant, every animal, in creation, and man, creation's lord. Shall God alone be transparent and easy of explanation? In him, surely, it is reasonable to expect the profoundest mysteries of all, and such we have already found. The infinity of his being is one mystery; the necessity of his being is another mystery; and the threefold complexity of his being is, doubtless, a third; but it is only a third; it is but one of a series of cognate mysteries, and is neither the first nor the last. Why should it be isolated, and made to stand alone? With its companion mysteries let it stand or fall. It will be time enough to abandon it on the ground of mystery, when it shall be ascertained to be the only mystery that demands an explanation.

But what, after all, is the meaning of this charge of mystery? We know God *plainly* only so far as his being is analogous to our own; what we know of him beyond this limit is obscure—that is, mysterious—because we experience nothing analogous to it by help of which it may become plain. Hence we cannot distinctly apprehend either the infinity or the necessity of his being, and for the same reason we cannot distinctly conceive of the Trinity. Were a threefold complexity in our nature as well as in God's, the matter would be plainer to us; but, since there is not, it is obscure—in other words, a mystery. This, then, is the whole case; there is no element in human nature analogous to the complexity of the divine—a very insufficient cause, certainly, for a denial of its existence.

2. Although the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be explained,

however, there may be laid down *certain canons according to which it is to be understood*, and which no interpretation of it must be permitted to violate.

The doctrine of the Trinity must be understood in harmony with the divine unity.

We have already seen with how much explicitness and force the Scriptures affirm that there is but one God, and it cannot be supposed for a moment that the Trinity is laid down by the same writers in any sense inconsistent with this cardinal truth. Nor in any sense inconsistent with this cardinal truth do we hold it. With a firm faith in the Trinity, we do not believe in three Gods.

It is of no use to meet us here with an exercise in arithmetic, and to tell us that one cannot be three and three cannot be one. We might be shut up to self-contradiction, indeed, if we affirmed that God was three in the same sense in which he is one, and one in the same sense in which he is three; but this is not our position. What we say is, that God is in essence one and undivided, but that in this one and undivided essence there is a threefold complexity of structure—which, I believe, is no contradiction.

The doctrine of the Trinity must be understood as affirming the true divinity of each person. Attempts have sometimes been made to escape the difficulty supposed to be involved in the doctrine of the Trinity, by assigning to the second and third persons in the godhead a grade inferior to the first, a high dignity, but a merely nominal, or *quasi*, divinity. I have no sympathy with these modes of representing the matter. In my view, if the second and the third persons are not altogether equal to the first they are not divine, for divinity does not admit of degrees; and, if they are not divine, there is no longer any trinity in the godhead. Whatever else there may be, or may be supposed to be, while certainly no less difficult of belief, its existence, real or fancied, is not worth contending for.

The doctrine of the Trinity must not be understood according to the laws of human personality.

It is a common formula for the expression of this doctrine that there are *three persons* in one God. Now I am not about to object to the use of the word person, than which, perhaps, our language does not supply one more expressive or more just; but it is proper and necessary to observe that,

as applied to the divine Trinity, the word person cannot have the full meaning which it has as applied to mankind. Nor can this be expected, since it is a term taken from human life, and applied to a being to whom man has otherwise but a very imperfect resemblance, and in this respect no resemblance at all. With us a person is a human being complete in himself, and separate from all other human beings; and three persons must necessarily be three separate individuals. Such an idea the use of the word person in relation to the divine Trinity has, no doubt, a tendency to convey to our minds as the meaning of the doctrine; and this tendency requires to be strictly guarded against, since it would land us, of course, in the conception of three Gods. What we have to recollect is, that the word person, as applied to the divine Trinity, does not mean all, but only part, of that which it means as applied to men; and that the godhead, although in some sense constituted of three persons, does not consist of three separate individuals.

The doctrine of the Trinity, nevertheless, establishes practically a personal distinction within the godhead; a distinction of persons without a division of substance. The current language of Scripture sufficiently shows this. The divine three are everywhere spoken of *as if* they were distinct persons. This is a sample: "God so loved the world that he gave his Son" (John iii. 16). "I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent me" (John viii. 16). "The Father shall send you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 16). "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them" (Acts xiii. 2). These are but samples of a style of expression which runs through all the Bible, and which demonstrates that the complexity in the divine nature is for all practical purposes a personal distinction.

Such are our views of the doctrine of the Trinity, its evidence, and its import. Let us, in conclusion, contemplate some of the aspects of the fact which has thus been brought before us.

First: *What a wonderful view of the divine nature is thus presented to us!*

In our preceding Lectures we may be said to have looked upon the divine nature from without, and we have seen it spreading in breadth through all space, and in length through

all duration; but now we have, by gracious permission, looked on it from within, and have seen what may well be called "the secret of the Lord." Like ourselves, God is a conscious being; but our consciousness is single, and his is complex—not twofold only, but threefold, within the same essential unity. Adorable name! God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! This is the God whom we worship, both in unity and in trinity; and we address our worship with justice, not merely to the three divine persons in unison, but to each apart.

It is important, however, that our experience should be guarded, after the same manner as our doctrinal views. I once had a religious professor confess to me that, while holding, as he supposed, the orthodox view of the Trinity, he had practically worshipped three gods, and he added that he thought many others did so too. In this I hope he was mistaken; but a tendency may set in this direction, against which we ought all to be on our guard. If the trinity in God may not be surrendered to his unity, on the other hand the unity of God should not be lost in the trinity. It will be well for us to recollect and to realize both, and studiously to cultivate a corresponding exercise of the devout affections.

Secondly: *What immense practical influence must be exercised by the complexity of the divine nature!*

It relieves the solitariness otherwise attached to the conception of divinity. God, as God, stands alone; not only alone in the universe which he has created, and from every portion of which he is at an infinite remove, but alone in the eternity antecedent to creation, when none but himself existed. There is something strange in the idea of the solitude in which the Divine Being is thus placed, by the necessity of his nature existing, but without a companion to engage his love, or to share his thoughts. Infinitely glorious, indeed, but doomed to the solitary contemplation of his own excellence, with none capable either of reflecting or beholding it. Accustomed as we are to the sense of social pleasure, and with the necessity which we feel for it, the solitariness which attaches to the idea of God is, when we dwell upon it, awful, even to painfulness. This feeling, however, is greatly, it may be said wholly, relieved by the complexity of his being. Within it, we have learned, is a threefold personal distinction, and for all practical purposes God is as if there

were three beings, each infinite, and possessing all other essential glories of divinity. He is thus, as I have called him, a SOCIAL UNITY, and all the elements exist out of which a society more glorious and blessed than can be conceived must have been eternally constituted and maintained.

1. In particular. *Scope is thus created for the exercise of complacent love.* It is not now that God beholds his glory in himself; he sees it reflected from another, namely, in the person of his Son, or of the Holy Spirit. And the glory of God is thus reflected, not, as it is in his works, partially and with an infinite inferiority, but completely and with infinite perfection. One person of the ever-blessed Trinity sees in another a nature like his own, the adequate reflection of his own excellence, and thus a worthy object of his complacent love; an object upon which his complacency may rest, not in the small and graduated measure in which it may be attracted by created things, but with a divine intensity; an object which even God may love (if I may accommodate the expression) with all his heart, and soul, and strength. What an infinite and eternal source of happiness is here!

2. *A motive for action is thus presented to the divine mind.* It is a scriptural, and undoubtedly a just representation, that God created all things for his own glory (Rev. iv. 11). Indeed, no other reason is conceivable why he should have created anything at all. But, were the nature of God simple and not complex—were God alone, and not in trinity—it would be difficult to detach altogether from this view an element which we cannot describe otherwise than by the word selfishness. God in trinity, however, can act for his own glory, not in himself but in another; the Father for the glory of the Son, and the Son for the glory of the Father, and the whole trinity mutually for the glory of each other. A motive to action is thus supplied, which, to our conception, is no longer selfish, but generous. In accordance with this idea we are told by an apostle that “God created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. iii. 9); or, as I suppose we may explain, with a view to his glory. And the following passage in the book of Proverbs seems to be founded on a similar conception:—

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting,

From the beginning, or ever the earth was ;
 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 When there were no fountains abounding with water.
 Before the mountains were settled,
 Before the hills was I brought forth ;
 While as yet he had not made the earth nor the fields,
 Nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
 When he prepared the heavens I was there,
 When he set a compass upon the face of the depths ;
 When he established the clouds above,
 When he strengthened the fountains of the deep ;
 When he gave to the sea his decree
 That the waters should not pass his commandment,
 When he appointed the foundations of the earth ;
 Then I was by him as one brought up with him :
 And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him,
 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth,
 And my delights were with the children of men."

Proverbs viii. 22-31.

3. *Opportunity is thus afforded for joint counsel and action.* The divine works are undoubted manifestations of a divine purpose. Not under the most ordinary conceptions of human wisdom can we deem God to have rushed into the arena which his own boundless nature supplied, to scatter in it, as by hazard, a multitude of crude and undigested works. The order and beauty everywhere prevalent are wholly incompatible with such a notion. And it is not to be supposed that the conceptions and purposes of the divine mind with respect to the created universe were confined to one person of the adorable Trinity; it was doubtless in concert planned, as in concert executed, the result of common wisdom as the effect of common power.

In relation to the work of redemption, however, the fact of mutual consultation becomes more obvious. Then the work to be achieved becoming more complex, the execution of it is more complex too, and it is carried out, not by simple concert but by co-operative subordination. It is divided into parts, and these parts are taken for separate accomplishment by the several persons of the Trinity, each accepting an economical superiority or inferiority, as the work to be done may require. God the Father becomes the fountain of mercy, in sovereign grace and judicial righteousness; God the Son becomes the messenger of peace, the atoning sacrifice, the mediating priest, the king, the judge; while God the Holy Spirit becomes the regenerator and the sanctifier. That

for all this there must, to speak humanly, have been preparatory counsel, cannot be doubted; none but deep thoughts of mutual wisdom could have arranged or devised a machinery so vast and intricate, or have secured the perfect subserviency of every part to an issue so glorious.

4. *Occasion is thus supplied for exercising the love of benevolence, and for the expression of gratitude.* These words may seem to sound strangely in relation to the divine Trinity; yet what but a love of benevolence towards the Father can be conceived of as animating the bosom of the Son when he accepted the mission of mercy, and undertook a part involving such deep humiliation and unutterable sorrow? And what less than gratitude can be the feeling of the Father towards the Son, by whom he has been so devotedly served, and so highly honoured; a feeling expressed in so many touching declarations of love which earth has heard, and substantially embodied in an exaltation and glory which shall be eternally conspicuous in the highest heaven?

How like, in all this, is God to ourselves, and yet how different! Love, counsel, co-operation, gratitude, are ours, but they belong to us as individuals, separate and apart from one another; in God alone are they found developed, by virtue of a mysterious complexity of nature, in one and the same being, who thus marvellously combines life and love in unity.

Thirdly: *What a new relation the doctrine of the Trinity opens between the creature and the Creator!* Everything in creation, doubtless, bears in some measure the likeness of God, since from his own nature alone could the conceptions which are the types of creation be derived. To this rule, however, the social nature of creatures might seem to have constituted an exception; for, if God himself had been solitary, how could he have conceived of society? And yet would it have been possible to believe that a world so full of social happiness was the product of a being himself a stranger to the exercise of the social affections? The complexity of the divine nature solves for us this enigma. He is a social being, and at once the concentration and the fountain of the social affections of the universe. The social life of creatures is an emanation from himself, and an imperfect resemblance of his own.

Finally: *What a basis the doctrine of the Trinity lays for*

the best hopes of mankind! To the work of human redemption as it is presented to us in the Scriptures, the trinity in the godhead is not only conducive, but essential. If without it the universe could have been created, without it the world could not have been redeemed. The fact of the wonderful development of the trinity in the actual work of redemption is a demonstration sufficient, that, in the hands of him by whom nothing is wasted, the instrument was as necessary as the result is glorious. Come, sinful, wretched, ruined, race! Adore in this wonderful prerogative of your Maker that which alone has capacitated him to be your Redeemer too; and glorify, as the God of your mercy and your hope, the God of salvation, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

HYMN.

SPIRIT eternal, infinite,
Veiled in excess of radiant light,
Thy secret, opened to our gaze,
Awakes our voice of reverent praise.

In thine essential nature one,
In thy divinity alone,
Yet complex is thy being, Lord,
The Father, Spirit, and the Word.

Our souls adore the sacred Three:
How bright their blended glories be!
Their counsels and their love supply
The Godhead with a social joy.

Not such are we; we live apart,
And singly beats each loving heart:
But thou, prerogative divine!
In one dost life and love combine.

LECTURE V.

GOD AN INTELLIGENT BEING.

“The Lord is a God of knowledge.”—1 *Samuel* ii. 3.

OUR preceding discourses have had respect to the nature of God in its most general aspect. We have learned that he is a spirit, infinite, necessary, and complex; but we are thus

evidently only on the threshold of our great subject, and it will now be proper to direct our attention to some attributes of another kind by which his glorious being is distinguished. I do not propose, however, to take the divine attributes in detail, a course which would involve much repetition, and might prove tedious; I intend rather to throw them into groups, so that those which are near akin to each other may be contemplated together. A suitable and comprehensive arrangement of some of those attributes of God which remain to be considered, may be arrived at by reverting to the primary conception under which we have regarded him. "God is a spirit," said the great Teacher. Now a spirit is a being intelligent, emotional, voluntary, and active. As such, then, we regard God, and under the heads thus indicated I shall proceed to a further consideration of his perfections.

On the present occasion I speak of God as AN INTELLIGENT BEING. "The Lord," says the prophet, "is a God of knowledge." In treating this subject my plan will be simple. I shall endeavour to present to you, first, THE GENERAL CONCEPTION OF THIS ATTRIBUTE; and, secondly, ITS LEADING PECULIARITIES.

I. In the first place I shall present to you THE GENERAL CONCEPTION of the attribute of which I am speaking—divine knowledge.

The idea of knowledge is by no means simple. There are various kinds of it, and various modes by which it is acquired; but for our present purpose it will be sufficient to view it under two aspects, according to the sphere with which it is concerned. To us there are presented two worlds, a world within us and a world without us; the former consisting of our own faculties in their varied action, and the latter of the entire universe besides. These two worlds are sufficiently distinct and dissimilar to warrant a division of our knowledge into two corresponding portions, the knowledge of the internal and the knowledge of the external. Without any pretensions to metaphysical accuracy, or regard to philosophical distinctions, I shall call our knowledge of the internal *consciousness*, and our knowledge of the external *observation*.

1. I speak first of *consciousness*. Consciousness enters essentially into our conception of a spiritual substance, or being, and is highly characteristic of it. It is a name for the plainest of all facts. It means that we all know, or, if

we will reflect, may know, that we possess certain faculties—such as those of thinking and feeling, for example—and that we know also when and how they act within us. We can think and learn, rejoice and be sorry, consent and refuse; we know we can, we are conscious of it; and, whenever we do think and learn, rejoice and be sorry, consent and refuse, we know that also, or, to repeat the word, we are conscious of it.

And, simple as the fact which this statement embodies may seem, it is in reality of the last importance and necessity to us. Without it our very being would practically cease. Let us suppose only that, without any other change in our nature, consciousness were withdrawn from us; that we still could, and did, think and feel as we do now, but did not know it; such a change would be tantamount to death. Our faculties and their action might as well not be at all. They would at least be reduced to the level of the physical powers. Not to think and feel only, but to be conscious of the powers we exercise, and of the mode in which we exert them, seems to be of the very essence of rational life.

And the influence of consciousness is as great as its necessity. It may be said without extravagance to have the effect of doubling our being; it indicates, at least, that our nature is twofold. I am, as it were, one that thinks and feels, and at the same time another who knows what is thought and felt. This twofold constitution indicates a mysterious personality within the rational mind, in which pre-eminently *the man* consists, and of which even the faculties of the mind are rather the instruments than the self.

Consciousness is the most direct and absolute form of our knowledge. That of which we are conscious we know in the most immediate and perfect manner possible. Our faculties and their action are nearer to us than any object in the external world, and are perceived by us without the use and intervention of the senses, which are necessarily employed upon things without us. To see, to taste, to touch, are means of knowledge, but to be conscious, as we are of our own powers and thoughts, is to have knowledge much more direct. It is the most direct even of the processes of the mind. To compare, to infer, to reason, are modes of knowledge, but consciousness supplies knowledge far more immediately than these.

This form of knowledge, consciousness, we ascribe to God. As a spirit it belongs to him. He knows himself.

The words I have uttered are few and simple, but how vast is their import ! For what a glorious field of knowledge is thus laid open to him ! That world within his being which is thus spread out before his eyes, what is it, and what does it contain ? It is a world filled with his own attributes, in all their majesty, variety, and beauty. Outspread lies his infinite substance, occupying boundless space, making the infinite void instinct with intelligent life, and diffusing throughout the whole an immeasurable intensity of it. All duration is full of him, alike the boundless future and the boundless past. Self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, immutable. Add to these the attributes which we have not yet glanced at—the holy and the wise, the just and the good, the kind and the true. Alone yet not lonely, the vast bosom of the Deity is animated with nameless social affections, exhibiting all the beauty, and breathing all the ardour, of the godhead. And if such be the being of God, what is its action ? His thoughts of skill, his purposes of wisdom, love, and righteousness, the eternal germs of many deeds by which his various attributes are to be at once employed and glorified. These are a few hints of the inner world which lies before him.

And he knows himself ! There is not a portion of that eternal nature, or a particle of that infinite glory, with which he is not intimately acquainted. It is all himself, and of it all he is conscious. This knowledge is exclusively his own. From all other beings, indeed, he is placed at an infinite remove by the majesty of his own nature, to all but himself unknown except as he shall be pleased to reveal it ; and, in so far as it may be revealed, a portion only—and how small a portion !—of himself is discovered. Other beings, however exalted, look on him still with dim and distant eye, only to confess a glory which defies penetration.

I may add, that the knowledge which God must be conceived to have of his own nature and attributes must be regarded as the primary, and originally the only, knowledge, since his existence was from everlasting, and consequently long anterior to that of the created universe. God's knowledge of himself is, of course, coeval with his own being ; not, like ours, acquired by slow degrees as our faculties are

developed, and requiring reflection, but, without even a glance at the wonders of his being, originally perfect and eternal. The divine consciousness must also be conceived of as unspeakably more complete and intense than ours, as penetrating his whole nature, and, as by a brilliant illumination, banishing from it all aspects of mystery. To us our own being is a mystery still; but we cannot conceive of God's being as a mystery to himself.

2. I have now to speak of the second kind of knowledge, or the knowledge of the external world, which, as distinguished from consciousness, I have called *observation*.

There is a sense in which God may be said to supply an external world to himself; I do not mean in the created universe, but in the complexity of his own nature. In our last Lecture we entered a little way into this subject, and found scriptural reason to ascribe to the divine Being a threefold personal distinction, affording a scope for social affections and action. Under this view it may be permitted me to observe, that to each person in the divine Trinity the others must be, to some extent, of the nature of an external world, and known, not by consciousness, but, so to speak, by observation. What a new world is thus open to the knowledge of the Deity! And a world how beautiful! The glorious world within repeated in equal glory without, a threefold universe of the infinite, the eternal, the blessed, the divine. And this, as it may be deemed, without an absolute identity; for, although I do not presume to say what diversity, yet it can hardly be doubted that some diversity is indicated by the appellations, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus in the divine unity is there repetition without sameness, and each presents to the other an aspect of equal, but varied, glory.

As to the created universe, it is scarcely necessary to assert in general terms that God possesses a knowledge of it, or to notice the speculations of some atheistical minds tending to a conclusion which they would be too well pleased to establish, namely, that he is ignorant of mundane affairs. This suggestion of a corrupt heart was well rebuked by the Psalmist in ancient days.

“ Yet they say the LORD shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.
Understand, ye brutish among the people,

And ye fools, when will ye be wise?
 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
 He that formed the eye, shall he not see?
 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?
 He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"

Psalm xciv. 7-10.

In his knowledge of the created universe, God has something in common with ourselves; but his knowledge of it so widely differs from our own, that I am led at once to the second part of my subject.

II. I proceed, then, to notice, in the second place, THE LEADING PECULIARITIES by which God's knowledge of the universe is distinguished. And I mention four: God's knowledge is peculiar, first, in its scope; secondly, in its mode; thirdly, in its form; and, fourthly, in its permanence.

I am not going to speak disparagingly of human knowledge; on the contrary, no terms of admiration, provided they be discreet, can be too expressive to be applied to it. The entire world of physical being is subjected to our curious gaze and inquisitive search, so far as the power of the instruments we can employ may extend. The earth, the sea, the atmosphere, the sky—all invite inquiry, and are all ready to reward our toil, by, to a certain and a large extent, revealing their secrets to us. Hence almost every aspect of nature affords the materials of a science. One relates to the earth's surface, another to its solid structure; one to the properties of matter, another to organic life; one to vegetable, another to animal, organization, and several to the principal varieties of these; while one ascends to the upper heavens, weighing and measuring the stars, and defining the orbits in which they move. The amount of knowledge contained in any one of these sciences is great, and that comprehended in the whole is beyond calculation. Nor is it the physical universe alone which is thus laid open to human inquiry. The spiritual world is not closed against us. The structure and operations of the mind become to us subjects of investigation; the world of morals, with all its important questions of duty and of recompense, is surveyed by us; and our philosophers make bold, not to say adventurous, excursions into the regions of abstract and profound speculation. Admirable powers of knowledge! And knowledge scarcely less admirable! Elevating our kind immeasurably above the creatures who surround us, and connecting us closely with beings, unseen as yet, who are above us.

With all its excellencies, however, human knowledge is not without its weaknesses. It is not only of necessity finite, but it is actually confined within very narrow limits. If we know much, it is certain we do not know all things; and, indeed, one result of our expanding knowledge is a firmer conviction that what we know is little rather than much, in comparison with what remains to be known. Our very senses fail us, and we have recourse to artificial means to help us to discover, on the one hand, what is too small for the eye, and, on the other, what is too large for it—the microscope bringing aid to us in the one case, and the telescope in the other; while as yet no means have been found of quickening the sensibility of man's refined yet stupid ear, so as to open to us the world of delicate sounds which breathe in every breeze. Our invention fails us equally with our senses. We discover facts, and we please ourselves that we can resolve them into facts more general; but we come at last, and often very speedily, to phenomena which we can trace no further, and we gild the vexatious obstructions by calling them ultimate facts—ultimate indeed to us, because we cannot proceed beyond them. Our very instruments fail us; one effect both of the microscope and the telescope being, while they enlarge wonderfully the boundaries of our knowledge, to place us on the verge of new worlds, for the investigation of which we cry out for lenses of unheard-of powers. In truth, while everything instructs and delights, everything perplexes us. Placed on a spot itself brilliantly illuminated, we are hemmed in on every side by mystery and darkness. If our knowledge is wonderful, so also is our ignorance; and the wider the sphere of the former, the more near and palpable become the shadows and barriers of the latter. It may be added, that the whole amount of human knowledge is far from being in the possession of any one man. It is well if a single man is absolute master of a single science; no man, certainly, ever was, or can be, master of them all. Human knowledge is rather the property of the race than of the individual. It is deposited in myriads of volumes, or scattered among millions of men. That so vast a treasure has been acquired constitutes the glory and the wealth of all, but a small portion indeed falls to the possession of each.

Strongly contrasted with man's knowledge of the universe is God's.

First, God's knowledge of the universe is peculiar in *its scope*. He knows all things.

What a vast comprehension is there in this phrase! God knows ALL THINGS. *All the physical facts of the universe:* every world that wends its ordered way through the boundless space, though the eager and watchful eye of man has never received a glimmer to indicate its being; every atom that enters into the constitution of any orb, in a relation however humble; all the affinities which bind them together, and the forms of life and beauty which, in various combination, they compose; all the elements which work, either on earth or in the heavens, and either affect the current of human life, or guide the courses of the stars. *All the vital facts of the universe:* his eye is on every one of the innumerable beings by whom the earth is peopled, from animalcules yet undetected by the microscope, to the behemoth of the land and the leviathan of the waters; he is cognizant of the condition and the wants of all, and, if unnumbered other worlds are as thickly peopled as this, still he knows them all, from the meanest insect to the mightiest angel. *All the moral facts of the universe:* the deeds of angels, men, and devils; the loves of heaven, and the conflicts of earth; the many deeds of oppression and wrong, and the more worthy deeds, not few, of heroism and love, each standing out in singleness before him. Nor deeds alone: the wisdom and the folly, the joys and the sorrows, of every individual; the thoughts and purposes of every breast, the most sacred secrets of the heart, not one of which escapes, or can evade, his piercing scrutiny. *All the historical facts of the universe:* the transactions of every world, of every country, of every family, of every individual, from the commencement of their being; war and peace, subjugation and conquest, discord and reconciliation, life and death. All things God knows: his mind is a repository of universal knowledge. "His understanding is infinite" (Psalm cxlvii. 5).

Secondly, God's knowledge of the universe is peculiar in *its mode*.

Beyond the sphere of consciousness our knowledge is not immediate; it is obtained through the medium either of the senses or of reflection, of experience or of information. Much that we know we have learned from others, or have acquired from books; much that we know is the result of our own

experience, and consists in lessons of fact or of wisdom conveyed to us through our feelings of pleasure or of pain; much that we know has come to us through inlets in our bodily frame—the eye, the ear, the hand—by means of which we come into contact with the world around us; and much that we know consists of combinations of our sensations, or of inferences and conclusions drawn from them.

God's knowledge of the universe is of a different kind. It is direct and immediate. It is not for him to look, as we do, through an organic medium at a world without him; it is not for him to derive one fact from another by a chain of reasoning; it is not for him to learn by experiment; it is not for him to gather knowledge from testimony. No distance separates him from what he is to know, no darkness shrouds any object from his vision, no secret hides itself from him, no fallacy lurks in obscure places; "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13). For to him, in truth, the universe is not, as it is to us, external. In him, as an infinite being, it exists. Its place of habitation is within his own bosom, and he may be said to know it, consequently, by a sort of consciousness. All its activities are acts, either of his own will, or of agents sustained by his power, and so in direct contact with himself.

Thirdly, God's knowledge of the universe is peculiar in *its form*.

It is obvious that all knowledge which is obtained indirectly must be imperfect; characterized by much feebleness, and liable to much uncertainty. Not in any of the sources of knowledge which have been specified can we ourselves place entire confidence. The testimony of the senses is proverbially delusive, and requires always to be supplemented or corrected by the exercise of the judgment, while the judgment itself may err, either from mistake in the elements on which it proceeds, or from a fallacy in its reasoning. How little trustworthy testimony sometimes is we all know; and, if some of the lessons of experience are truths, this must be said rather of the experience of the race than of that of individuals.

A very small portion of human knowledge is strictly certain. In comparatively few instances can we arrive at absolute and necessary truth. With the exception of mathe-

mathematical truths, which do possess an absolute certainty, the general character of human knowledge may be expressed by the term probability. Even some facts which we popularly reckon most certain, and a large number of facts on which we act with the greatest confidence, are in reality not more than highly probable. Nothing seems to us, perhaps, more true than that the sun will rise to-morrow; yet our only proof of this is derived from experience, assuredly a very fallible guide. The sun rose yesterday, and has risen every day for a long period of time. Yes, it will most probably rise to-morrow; yet it is certain that a morrow is coming when it will not rise, and no one can tell when that morrow may arrive; on the very eve of its dawning, perhaps, the inhabitants of the earth may be as confident of the sunrise as we are to-day. A similar remark might be made respecting the course of nature at large, which, because it is to all practical purposes fixed, we allow ourselves to reckon it positively stable, while in reality there is a probability only of its continuance. In like manner our life is ruled by probabilities. It is probable that frugality and industry will lead to competency, and that intemperance will entail poverty and shorten life; but that these things are only probable, and not absolutely certain, is manifest from this that the results do not always happen. Sometimes a frugal and industrious man is found in want, and sometimes a drunkard lives in great wealth and to a great age. Moral evidence, also, is of the nature of probability, not of demonstration. Many of the most important truths must be stated in the form of propositions in favour of which some arguments may be advanced, while other arguments may be advanced against them; and, to arrive at a conclusion, the evidence is to be weighed, objections considered, and the balance struck—the conclusion not being a certainty absolute, but a preponderance of evidence decisive of our judgment. It is upon such evidence that the general course of human life, and even the administration of human law in its severest forms, proceeds. We call it certainty, and it is certainty sufficient for our conduct; yet it is not certainty absolute, but certainty graduated—either a greater or less degree of probability.

Not such is God's knowledge of the universe. With him are no probabilities. With him there are no arguments to weigh, no objections to balance; with him there are no

chances to estimate, no experience to guide ; no testimony to inform, no senses to perceive, no reasoning to help to a conclusion. Seeing everything directly, not in appearance but in reality, his knowledge is absolute. He knows, not only things as they may be, but things as they will be ; not only things as they are, but the causes that make them such. And he knows all the causes that are in operation, and those combinations of influences, often so unexpected and baffling to us, which prevent in a particular case an anticipated result. He is, in fact, himself the cause in the physical universe, and, in knowing all its movements with an absolute knowledge, it may be said he only knows himself, and the purposes of his own will. As to the world of voluntary being, although his agency is less direct, his knowledge is not less absolute. The necessary exercise of his power in the sustentation of rational creatures involves an equal necessity of entire and absolute knowledge.

Fourthly, God's knowledge of the universe is peculiar in *its permanence*.

Human knowledge is of gradual acquirement. We are continually applying our faculties to its increase, and from moment to moment it is increasing. Of the knowledge which has already been acquired we laboriously master first one portion and then another ; and for what is yet future we wait in ignorance until events transpire, or causes develop their action. Not such is God's knowledge of the universe. That is "from everlasting." He anticipated all events, and knew all things from the beginning. Thus belongs to him the attribute, not only of omniscience, but also of prescience, or foreknowledge, a prerogative peculiar to himself. A shadow of it, indeed, may be said to belong to us, to whom the gift of anticipation in some small measure, such as the purposes of human life require, has not been denied ; but our power of anticipation is as nothing compared with his. In this respect we walk in darkness, and God in light. Strange knowledge ! to which creation with all its wonders, and time with all its changes, have added nothing.

Human knowledge is evanescent. Nothing is easier to man than to forget. Some things, indeed, deeply touching his feelings, take a place in his memory never to be abandoned, and become thenceforth commensurate with his being, memories evermore a part of himself ; but, for the most

part, beyond the knowledge required for the current purposes of life, and retained in its freshness by habitual use, what we know is soon forgotten. The memory, if burdened with a large amount of knowledge, either refuses to retain it, or sinks beneath its load. In the changing scenes of later life, a very large part of what we knew in our youth—of our school-learning, for example—sinks into oblivion; and, as old age advances on us, our memory itself decays, and refuses, except by a kind of unconscious tenacity, to be the depository of knowledge any longer. Thus our knowledge to a large extent passes away from us, and is as though it had never been.

But God's knowledge of the universe is permanent. It is not only "from everlasting," but "to everlasting." His memory (if we may so speak) has a capacity that is boundless, and can both contain and retain all knowledge. And it never decays. God cannot forget. Oblivion is a stranger to him. It is, however, only by an impropriety of speech that we ascribe memory to God. To him, as an eternal being, there is neither a past to be remembered, nor a future through which to carry its remembrance; for eternity is duration without succession, and mysteriously blends the past, the present, and the future, into one. His knowledge, like himself, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Such, brethren, are the illustrations which it has occurred to me to present to you of our present theme. God, as a spirit, is an intelligent being, "a God of knowledge." His consciousness, or knowledge of himself, of which our own consciousness may be deemed a shadow, is infinitely perfect; but his knowledge of created worlds differs widely from our own, in four respects—it is universal, immediate, absolute, and eternal. Let me now offer some concluding reflections.

In the first place, *what a glorious view of God has been exhibited to us!* To know is, in some measure, the property of every animated being, and it seems essential to the maintenance of sensitive life; but the amount of knowledge in the lowest forms of existence must be conceived of as exceedingly small. As the capacity of knowledge increases, creatures rise in the scale of being; exhibiting, for example, more perfect organs, or more extensive and varied instincts. An immensely greater capacity of knowledge than pertains to any other of the animal tribes places man at the head of

terrestrial beings, and the highest developments of this constitute a sort of natural aristocracy among mankind. We pity the feeble-minded and the ignorant, while we admire men of enlarged mind and ample knowledge. And if, as we believe, there are beings still higher than ourselves, we doubt not that their superiority is vindicated by a capacity of knowledge proportionably larger than our own.

Measured by such a scale, how shall we estimate the divine glory? "The Lord is a God of knowledge;" possessing this attribute, indeed, in common with many of his creatures, but in what vastness and majesty does he possess it! The whole of his infinite and adorable nature known and realized by his consciousness; the entire creation naked to his view, and his knowledge of it universal, immediate, absolute, and eternal! Verily, he stands alone, and none can come nigh unto him. Bow before him every creature, all living hosts; ye sons of genius, and ye sons of light!

In one respect God's knowledge stands out in signal contrast with our own. To us in everything there is mystery; to him there is no mystery. Even when our knowledge is most clear and satisfactory, it leads us only to a certain point, beyond which explanation is impossible; to God all things are plain. A luminous and transparent connexion is apparent to him between all effects and their causes, and between all causes and their effects; while he has also a clear perception of the result to be attained, and of the process by which it is to be secured.

In the second place, *what a basis is laid for God's universal administration!* It is fit that he should know all, since he has to care for all, and to govern all. How else, indeed, could he acquit himself of his obligations? Were he unconscious for a single instant of any portion of his own attributes or action, how strange a sensation would spread itself through universal being! Were he uninformed or forgetful of any portion of his works, or in ignorance of any secret thing within his dominion, how could he carry on his administration? But his infinite knowledge fits him for universal government. His own energies are all at his command. He sees every creature he has to direct, every want he has to supply, every grief he has to soothe, every fault he has to correct, every crime he has to punish. And, as he does not lose the individual in the crowd, so neither

does he in his care of the individual lose the multitude. The little and the great are alike to him; and he is equally at home in observing the hidden tortuosities of the worm and the splendid evolutions of the stars.

In the third place, *what a solemn thought it is that we live under his eye!* "The Lord is a God of knowledge." Yes; and he knows *us*, intimately, always, everywhere. There is not one of us who may not take up the words of the Psalmist, written so long ago, and say—

"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou compasses my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me."

Psalm cxxxix. 1-5.

In what spirit are we living beneath such a presence? Do we cherish an habitual remembrance of this perpetual and watchful observation? Alas! dear hearers, are there not many of you to whom it is as if it were not? You talk of secrecy, and in what you deem secret places will do what you would not dare to do in the presence of another. Hiding yourselves from your fellow-creatures, you fancy yourselves hidden from your Maker. Vain imagination! For God is there. He hears the stealthy tread of the polluted sensualist, he knows the hiding-place of the lurking thief, he watches the aim of the midnight assassin. O sinner, if thou art wise, open thine eyes, and behold him! Live with the truth upon thy lips, "Thou God seest me" (Genesis xvi. 13).

"If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me,
Even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day;
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

Psalm cxxxix. 11, 12.

A large part of your tranquillity is probably owing to your forgetfulness. You forget much, and you imagine that God has equally forgotten. To you crimes and follies are buried in the past, and you do not expect that they will ever be recovered from their grave. How it would startle you to

have some transactions of your life newly presented to you at this moment, transactions which you had deemed long since forgotten! They are not forgotten, however, for they have a permanent record in the mind of God, and shall one day—that day how solemn!—be presented to you again in a vivid remembrance. God is prepared for judgment: dear hearer, *are you?* He has a faithful record of your sins; can you plead that through the blood of Christ those sins are forgiven?

In the fourth place, *what consolation our subject brings to the children of God!* Yes, my brethren, it is matter of rejoicing for you that God knows all things. Oh! if it were not so; if there were any moment of your existence in which your condition might be supposed to be unknown to him, that moment would indeed be inexpressibly full of peril and of sorrow. It is your safety and your joy that you live with him, and that he lives with you, your Guardian, your Refuge, your Friend. Rejoice, then, that “the Lord is a God of knowledge,” and that his knowledge has no bounds. Everything in your condition is known to him. Your wants and your dangers, your wealth and your poverty, your health and your sickness, your successes and your disappointments, your solitary and your public hours. Everything in your heart is known to him. Your pleasures and your pains, your hopes and your fears, your joys and your sorrows. All is known to him, and, being known, is secure of being regarded with paternal love. Does not the thought shed a light, as it were a celestial illumination, around you? What scene can be to you dark or cheerless, when every one, to the eye of faith, may be thus radiant with the light of his countenance? The way that you take he knows, the path by which he means to lead you he knows, and he knows the eternal home to which he means to conduct you that you may dwell with him for ever.

HYMN.

DISPLAYED, O Lord, before thine eye,
The glories of thy being lie;
Vast field of beauty, by thee known
Ere worlds were framed, or suns had shone.

Uplifted to thy piercing gaze,
Nature presents her smiling face;

Naked with all her secrets stands,
Opens her heart, and spreads her hands.

Nor shade nor change thy knowledge shows,
Which ever is, nor fades nor grows ;
The future, past, and present, bear
Their mingled voices to thine ear.

How vain to hope that sinners may
Escape thine infinite survey !
And why should I distrust thy care,
Whose eye observes me everywhere ?

LECTURE VI.

GOD AN EMOTIONAL BEING.

“The beauty of the Lord.”—*Psalm xxvii. 4.*

WE are now engaged in considering such of the attributes of God as are suggested by our conception of him as a Spirit, and we contemplate them in the groups into which this conception of God with facility throws them. In our preceding Lecture we spoke of God as an intelligent Being, as “a God of knowledge;” we now proceed to speak of him as an EMOTIONAL BEING, or as characterized by feeling.

To feel is the second general property which we have assigned to a spiritual substance, or being, as to know is the first. It belongs to a spirit to be in various ways moved, or affected—to desire, to love, to hope, to rejoice, and their contraries ; these, as they are variously excited, are emotions, or affections, of the mind. As objects adapted to excite such emotions are presented to us, our nature responds to them by excited feelings, infinitely diverse both in form and degree, but all confessing the susceptibility which characterizes it. The bosom of man is like tinder to the spark, and from external objects are struck off the sparks by which its passions are often but too promptly and too powerfully inflamed. It is to the production of this result, indeed, that knowledge is directly instrumental, and for the production of it that our active powers are ever waiting. Feeling is the moving power—the steam—of the rational engine, man ;

without which knowledge would be cold, light without heat, and energy dormant, power without impulse.

These views being admitted respecting ourselves, it may be questioned whether we should not be going too far if we were to ascribe to God anything so purely human; and I shall, therefore, devote a few introductory remarks to the elucidation of this point.

It cannot be denied that, in the Holy Scriptures, language expressive of feeling is freely applied to God. "The Lord *loveth* the righteous" (Psalm cxlvi. 8). "He is *angry* with the wicked" (Psalm vii. 11). "He *delighteth* in mercy" (Micah vii. 18). "It *grieved* him at his heart" "that he had made man" (Genesis vi. 6). You are all aware that a multitude of passages of similar phraseology might readily be cited.

That this language is not to be applied to God in precisely the same sense as that in which it is applied to man, is undoubtedly true; but that is not the question before us. The question to be decided is whether in any real sense this language is applicable to God, or whether the limitations required shall go so far as entirely to destroy its meaning. God does not feel in all respects as we do; but does he feel at all, and is there any element in his nature which can properly be called emotional? If a negative answer is to be returned to these inquiries, one can scarcely help concluding that the language of Scripture has been unfortunately chosen, and is of a delusive tendency—a charge hardly to be brought with truth against language inspired by God himself. If, however, the phraseology before us does not mean that in some sense God feels, what does it mean? If anything, it would seem something of which we can form no conception, and to us practically, therefore, nothing. It might as well be blotted out of the book altogether.

It is proper, however, that our position should be guarded, and that we should take care not to ascribe to God more than is appropriate to his nature. The mode in which we shall most readily attain this object, is to detach from our conception of affections of the divine mind such elements as may be deemed peculiar to ourselves. Now, among affections which cannot be ascribed to God are these:—

1. *Corporeal affections.* Undoubtedly, God has no appetites, such as hunger and thirst, nor liability to physical pain.

Not being corporeal, all bodily sensations must be utterly foreign to him.

2. *Instinctive affections.* Instinctive affections are implanted in all creatures for the purpose of their own well-being, and are always of a kind having a relation and a fitness to the special position and necessities of each. An example of this class is the instinct of self-defence. Affections of this kind are, undoubtedly, in God, both without occasion and without existence.

3. *Infirm affections,* which either betoken the infirmity of our nature, or arise out of the elements of our position; such as caution, anxiety, or hope. God is clearly placed above all circumstances which can give occasion for these.

4. *Sinful affections.* Such are affections either wrong in themselves, or awakened by improper objects and cherished in improper degrees, and such, to a large extent indeed, are the affections of corrupt humanity; but no misplaced or faulty affections can be ascribed to the Deity.

With these, and perhaps some other, requisite qualifications, it seems to me that to God, as a spirit, feeling is properly to be ascribed. How, indeed, can he be said to be a spirit if it be not so? Of what use, even to him, could his infinite knowledge be, if there were no emotional nature to which it could be presented? Or of what use his almighty power, if there were no kindled affections to supply an impulse to its action?

Assuming, then, that the nature of God is emotional, the inquiry before us is by what affections is it characterized? I feel that the question I have thus enunciated is a deep, and even an awful one; but I hope I do not venture too far in propounding it, and I rejoice in the persuasion that, in attempting its solution, I shall not be without a trustworthy guide.

I begin by a general observation. The attributes of God are, for the most part, presented to us in connexion with the affairs of mankind, and naturally so, since God's administration towards man is the grand theme of his intercourse with us. We have to recollect, however, that God himself existed, not only long before the human race, but before the most venerable portion, if one be older than another, of this wide universe. He is from everlasting; and, whatever affections may have been called forth in him towards ourselves,

or towards the inhabitants of any other worlds, there must be affections by which he has been characterized from everlasting, and altogether antecedently to the existence of any part of creation. It is after these that we must in the first instance inquire, and more particularly because these are the primary and essential affections of his nature, the basis and the roots of those secondary and accidental affections which are exhibited in his works and ways.

Our inquiry thus divides itself into two parts: the first will have for its object to ASCERTAIN THE ESSENTIAL AFFECTIONS of the divine nature; and the second to TRACE THE MODIFICATIONS OF THEM apparent in the divine administration.

I. The first part of our inquiry relates to the ESSENTIAL AFFECTIONS of the divine nature; those which characterize his being considered in itself, and which would have existed on the supposition of there having been no created universe.

1. Of these we find our way to at least one with great facility. For thus sings the Psalmist:

“Exalt ye the LORD our God,
And worship at his holy hill;
For the LORD our God is HOLY.”

Psalm xcix. 9.

And to cite another witness: “In the year that king Uzziah died,” says the prophet Isaiah, “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is filled with his glory” (Isaiah vi. 1-3). A similar ascription of praise occurs in the apocalyptic vision, where the four-and-twenty elders are represented as surrounding the eternal throne. “And they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. iv. 8). On the citation of these passages, it is obvious to remark the emphasis attached to the divine perfection here celebrated by a threefold repetition; there is no other attribute of the godhead in the scriptural exhibition of which a similar intensity of expression is to be observed.

As to the nature of the attribute thus ascribed to God,

little difficulty exists. From an elementary signification which does not seem to go beyond the separation of an object from a common to a special use, the word holy rises to the higher meaning of separation from a human to a divine use; and again rising in its import, it comes to denote a separation from the ceremonially unclean to the clean, and from the morally impure to the pure. Thus in its highest meaning it denotes a moral quality in the person to whom it is applied; and, doubtless, in God it denotes a moral state, or affection, in his nature, an entire separation from moral impurity and wrong. Or, passing from the negative to the positive idea, the word holy may be said to denote an absolute love of the right, or of rectitude, in itself and for its own sake.

Some persons have conceived of rectitude as determined by the nature of God, rather than of the nature of God as accordant with rectitude; but I cannot take this view. However the nature of God, and his will as expressive of it, may become our best and only practical guide in right doing, theoretically, I think rectitude must be considered as having an abstract existence—that is, a possible existence in thought—antecedently to Deity, and as constituting a rule to which it is the moral glory of his being to be conformed. Otherwise an ascription of holiness to him is scarcely in any sense intelligible; since whatever he had been he must have been holy, if his own nature were the only standard of holiness.

2. In a manner equally satisfactory we are conducted to a second primary affection of the divine mind by the language of the apostle John, "God is LOVE" (1 John iv. 8). This, again, is a form of expression emphatic and unique.

Our conception of love, however, divides itself into two parts. There is a love of benevolence, or a sentiment of kindness towards another; and there is a love of complacency, or a sentiment of delight in another: the former contemplates the well-being of its object, the latter its intrinsic excellence; the former we cherish for the sake of the object on which it is fixed, the latter for our own. The latter of these we take as the second of our group of primary divine affections. We name it COMPLACENT LOVE, or delight in the beautiful. This is quite natural. We cannot suppose God to be destitute of sensibility to what is lovely, any more than of sensibility to what is right. These are, in fact, but two forms of beauty, the one physical, and the other moral.

Boundless materials for the exercise of this affection are presented to the divine Being. On the one hand, the glories of his own nature stand conspicuously before him ; a nature the most elevated, perfect, and sublime, and fitted at once to engage and to satisfy a complacent love the most vast and exalted. This infinite complacency in his own perfections is but what they deserve, and cannot be called *self*-complacency in the sense in which that term is applied to ourselves. In us self-complacency involves a sentiment of pride, as if the qualities in which we glory were our own, and a forgetfulness of the humility which should arise from the recollection that we have nothing but what we have received ; but in God there is no scope for such a recollection ; he is the fulness of his own being and the fountain of his own excellencies, and in him complacency in the infinite excellencies which characterize his being is no pride. Its absence would show a want of sensibility to the supremely beautiful which could not be to his honour.

On the other hand, by means of the complexity of his nature, the glories of God's being are in a twofold form reflected in his own eyes, I mean by the persons of the divine Trinity ; so that he has the opportunity of being complacent, not only in himself but in another, and in another equally worthy of an infinite love.

And, in addition to these aspects of his own nature, may be mentioned the infinite number of conceptions lying eternally within his own mind, all of them divinely beautiful, and constituting the archetypes of the created universe, or the thoughts which creative power and skill were afterwards to embody in forms of concrete loveliness without number.

3. For the second member of our group of primary divine affections we have thus selected the love of complacency, but not with a view of discarding the love of BENEVOLENCE, which we now take for our third.

This may be generally described as a delight in happiness, that is to say, in the happiness of another—for it is always directed to another. The scope which exists for the exercise of this affection in the case of the divine Being is to be found, of course, in the fact of the divine Trinity. There, indeed, is no aspect of want or sorrow, to call for the exercise of benevolence as it is so perpetually needed among ourselves ; but benevolence can exist among the happy, as, for example,

among the holy angels; nor do I see why it should not be regarded as an affection eternally existing among the ever-blessed Three one towards another—the infinite delight of each in the happiness enjoyed by the others, and ministered to so largely by the holy fellowship of all.

Farther than this I am not disposed to go, in our search after the primary affections of the divine nature. Nor do I think that we need to go farther; for we have alighted on affections infinitely noble, alike in their single and their combined aspects. Holiness, for example—absolute, infinite, eternal, unchangeable holiness—what an admirable feature of the divine character is this! Complacent love, or a quick sensibility to the beautiful—what a lovely aspect of the divine character is this! And benevolent love, or a delight in well-being, an eternal fount of sympathy and kindness—how unspeakable is the charm of this! Then group these attributes together. Holiness and love; this, emotionally, is God. How glorious a divinity! Or, somewhat more at large, holiness, complacency, and benevolence; this, emotionally, is God. A love of the right, the beautiful, and the blest! In briefer phrase, a love of beauty, since the right, the beautiful, and the blest, are but three forms of beauty—the physical, the conscious, and the moral. Regarded still more generally, all these are resolvable into love, a sweet and glorious passion, absorbing the whole heart of God into itself.

The affections of which I have been speaking may be viewed, not only as associated in a common group, but as having a relation, or order, among themselves. I should arrange them thus: the first, holiness; the second, complacency; the third, benevolence; since rectitude must be conceived to stand before both complacency and benevolence, as implying a standard for the former and a rule for the latter. So that, in the entire administration of God, we may expect the influence of holiness to be predominant, and the gratification of benevolence, if not to be secured in harmony with it, to be made subordinate to it.

Such are the essential affections which divine consciousness feeds and supplies with inexhaustible materials. Such God has been eternally, and would have been eternally had there been no creation; and, of all the affections of which the created universe has led to the exhibition, this abyss of love is the fountain.

II. Let us now turn to the second part of our inquiry, and observe under what MODIFICATIONS these primary affections present themselves, as worlds start into being, and the divine administration proceeds.

1. We conceive, then, that the moment has arrived at which the will of the Almighty has brought the universe into existence. He has established the foundations of the earth, and stretched forth the heavens as a tent to dwell in. He has sent forth the celestial orbs in their courses, and ordained the day and the night for ever. He has covered the face of the earth with fruitfulness, and peopled it with living things without number. And what is the aspect which God assumes towards this immense production of his power? The sweet singer of Israel shall announce it to you:

“The earth is full of the GOODNESS of the Lord.”
Psalm xxxiii. 5.

“The Lord is GOOD to all,
And his tender mercies are over all his works.”
Psalm cxlv. 9.

“How excellent is thy LOVINGKINDNESS, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of thy wings.”
Psalm xxxvi. 7.

These interesting and beautiful expressions clearly point to one and the same manifestation of the divine benevolence, and exhibit that essential affection of God's nature in practical development. And most fitly so. For here is a vast, and all but boundless, realm of being, at once dependent, necessitous, and helpless; creatures of every frame from the archangel to the worm, and of multitudes innumerable, pressed incessantly with wants and dangers of infinite variety, and whose very weakness constitutes a plea of no ordinary power to any being able to respond to it, but to whom so powerful as to God? By him all these creatures have been brought into being, and all these ceaseless wants have been generated, and it is not surely for him to be regardless of them. If sentient being is to exist, it is fit that it should be happy. Sensibility awakened by pain, wants without a supply, danger without a defence—in a word, a universe without a providence—would exhibit an aspect rather hideous than beautiful, and, on a single glance at its position, such a universe might well repine at its existence, and wish

to die. Not such, however, was the destiny which God had prepared for his creation. The delight in conscious happiness which eternally characterized him prepared him for this demand; and, in becoming, as the author of being, the universal parent, he enters upon the occupation of his position with a father's heart. How much he has done to render happy the various modes of existence which owe their origin to him! The physical arrangements which contribute to this end are to the last degree varied and beautiful, while his personal and individual care is without exception or intermission. Under his wings the whole creation nestles. At the table which he daily spreads the entire universe sits like a household. Under his guidance every beast finds his lair, and every bird her nest; while for man he provides that charm of mysterious name—a home. No danger escapes him; for “a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his notice.” No care is too minute for him, for even the “hairs of our head are numbered;” no voice of sorrow is too faint to reach his ear, “for the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners” (Matthew x. 29, 30; Psalm lxix. 33).

2. Let us now contemplate a different aspect of creation, and look at the globe on which our own lot is cast as the abode of voluntary beings, the theatre of rational life and of moral action. Here it pleases God to rule in a special manner the creatures whom he has made to obey. He proclaims a law, enforces its obligation, and attaches to it sanctions, both of reward and punishment. We ask, then, What are the attributes ascribed to God in this character of moral governor?

A first answer to this question may be supplied to us by the words of the apostle Paul: “The law is *holy*, and the commandment *holy, and just, and good*” (Romans vii. 12). Here we have distinctly brought out the attribute of JUSTICE as a leading feature of God's administration towards man, a practical manifestation of his essential holiness, or love of rectitude. And undoubtedly this attribute appears in its proper sphere. In making of any being requirements which are to be enforced by rewards and penalties, it is assuredly a matter of moral beauty that such requirements should be made only of beings capable of fulfilling them, in a sense equitably proportionate to their capacity, and under sanctions

duly corresponding to their desert. A system in which either of these elements should be sensibly wanting would be distressing to every well-constituted mind. Nor has a system so defective originated in the divine mind, or been embodied in the divine administration. His holiness, or essential delight in rectitude, has stamped its absolute and ruling character on every branch of his moral government. His law is JUST: just in what it requires, and in the persons on whom its requirements are made; just in the estimate of human conduct, and in the allotment of divine rewards.

“The Lord is RIGHTEOUS in all his ways,
And holy in all his works.”

Psalm cxlv. 17.

Of this moral administration it is written, “The WRATH of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men” (Romans i. 18). And sometimes a word is used of powerful expression, but to a kindly ear painful and revolting; his “vengeance” (Psalm xciv. 1), and his “fury” (Isaiah lxiii. 3). Can such terms, it may be asked, be truly descriptive of any divine sentiment, or consistent with the ruling love of the beautiful which has been ascribed to him? Here it will be useful to recollect that the terms applied to God are, of necessity, such as have been first applied to man; and upon the ground of a sufficient analogy, but not of a perfect resemblance, they are transferred from man to his Maker. It results from this that such terms are not to be applied to God in any such sense as shall attach to him the faults, or even the infirmities, of man. Now wrath, vengeance, and fury, are extreme and unjustifiable forms of human anger, and have certainly no strictly corresponding emotions in God; as applied to him the purpose of these terms must be, not so much to denote an excessive excitement of anger, as the great intensity which characterizes this sentiment in God, in common with all the affections of the divine mind. Not more intense is his anger than his love. Relieved from the air of severity thus needlessly given to it, however, the wrath, or anger, of God against sin and sinners is a genuine manifestation of his holiness. For the love of right is also the hatred of wrong, and these antagonistic affections must evidently be of equal force. If, on the one hand, “the Lord loveth the righteous,” so, on the other hand, must he be “angry with the wicked.” While “he delighteth

in the steps of a good man," it is but a necessary antithesis that he should hate, and even abhor, the evildoer. These last terms are expressive, not of malevolence or unkindness, but of simple purity, or intense love of rectitude; and the feature of the divine countenance thus presented to us is one, both of exquisite beauty in itself, and of perfect congruity with the entire portrait to which it belongs. Not to hate evil and abhor evildoers were a foul blot on so fair a face, a deformity deeply to be deplored. It is requisite only that divine anger be not in excess of sin's desert, a limitation which the holiness of which it is an expression securely guarantees to us.

3. We may now take a glance at God's dispensation of peace towards a guilty world through his well-beloved Son. For "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians v. 19). Here, in his Gospel, are glad tidings of great joy unto all people, that a Saviour has come in the name of the offended Sovereign, and that he is at once able and willing to save all that come unto God by him. What divine sentiment is manifested in this dispensation?

To this question the Scriptures supply a ready answer. "The GRACE of God bringeth salvation" (Titus ii. 11). "By GRACE ye are saved" (Ephesians ii. 5). Grace is unmerited favour, a direct manifestation of the love of benevolence when its object is at once miserable and guilty. And thus it is expressly spoken of. "For God so *loved* the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

By a kindred form of expression, the same apostle says, "According to his MERCY he saved us" (Titus iii. 5). A shade only of distinction here exists; if grace be favour to the unworthy, mercy is favour to the guilty. COMPASSION, which is also ascribed to God in the same connexion, may be regarded as favour to the miserable. Thus the varying aspects of man's condition elicit corresponding developments of the divine benevolence.

A vast scope, indeed, for the exercise of this attribute has the guilt and ruin of mankind presented; at once unbounded wretchedness to pity, and unbounded sinfulness to forgive—a task o'ermastering any but the Deity. All, however, has

been done "according to the riches of his grace," before which every obstacle has disappeared, or rather, to which every obstacle has ministered only an occasion for a fresh and more signal triumph. God's delight in happiness is gloriously manifested here.

It is obvious, however, that the theatre thus opened for the exercise of divine benevolence is not one in which that attribute can be exercised alone, or be allowed to indulge itself without restriction. Upon a guilty world justice has claims which, although unsatisfied as yet, must be satisfied, here or hereafter. God's love of right cannot be sacrificed to his love of happiness; rather, as I have already hinted, is God's love of happiness to be practically subordinated to his love of right. Justice must be done, even though grace should be denied her gratification. By what a wonderful device of divine wisdom has it been brought to pass that, upon this theatre, and in the work of human redemption, these attributes of grace and justice, in the circumstances apparently so irreconcilable, have been introduced, not in collision, but in harmony! For in Christ Jesus, and through the expiation for sin effected by his death, God is "just, and the justifier of him that believeth" (Romans iii. 26). Thus, as was seen and sung of old—

"Mercy and truth have met together,
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."
Psalm lxxxv. 10.

4. One glimpse more of the divine ways solicits our regards. In the administration of his government God has been pleased to manifest himself by many declarations of things not seen as yet, and of purposes unfulfilled: on the one hand purposes of grace, announced in "exceeding great and precious promises," fitted to kindle the hopes of his children; and on the other hand purposes of wrath, announced in corresponding threatenings, fitted no less to awaken the fears of his foes.

In relation to these declarations another of his attributes develops itself. "The LORD," says Moses, "is a God of TRUTH, and without iniquity" (Deuteronomy xxxii. 4). And the language of Balaam addressed to Balak, the son of Zippor, is of similar import:—

"God is not a man that he should lie,
Neither the son of man that he should repent.

Hath he said, and shall he not do it?
Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Numbers xxiii. 19.

Here also divine FAITHFULNESS appears. "For," says the apostle, "he is faithful that promised" (Hebrews x. 23). According to a figure employed by the prophet Isaiah:—

"Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

Isaiah xi. 5.

Veracity and faithfulness are obviously branches of holiness, or the love of rectitude; essential rectitude exercised in a specific case. A vast field, indeed, is opened to these attributes by the threatenings and the promises of God, which occupy the future, both temporal and eternal, with awful and glorious anticipations, all to be converted into equally magnificent realities. Graven upon them all you may read the motto which eternal righteousness has affixed, and which the stars of heaven are continually repeating, "Not one of them faileth."

Having thus conducted our inquiry to a termination, permit me to add a few concluding remarks.

1. The view which we have thus taken of God as an emotional being is at once simple and sublime. The primary and essential affections of the divine nature are love of the right, the beautiful, and the happy; or, in a form only more condensed, his one primary affection is love of the beautiful: and this one affection, as the created universe challenges it into diversified manifestation, assumes the forms of goodness and justice, wrath and grace, faithfulness and truth. This, emotionally, is God! We may thus be said to look into his heart, and emphatically to see "the beauty of the Lord." How deformed and dreadful had been all the other aspects of his being, if his heart were not so lovely! Ah! what a heart! It is this which animates his infinite being, and glows like a furnace through the universal expanse. It is this heart which, pulsating at the centre, gives circulation to the circumference of being. It is this heart on which infinite knowledge scatters the sparks which kindle it to passion. It is this heart which supplies impulses to the movements of omnipotence. This is the necessary, eternal, unchangeable God. Felicitous necessity! Inexpressible happiness! This is the fount of being, the parent of the universe. Congratu-

late thyself, universal nature! that thou hast a parent so beautiful.

2. How interesting is the reflection that God is, in this respect, in some measure like ourselves. And how much like! *We love*; and, if our nature were what it was originally, and what it should be now, we, like God, should love the right, the beautiful, and the happy. Yet how unlike! Sadly indeed is the original resemblance marred, and man's poor heart has become the abode of ill-directed and ill-regulated passions. Sad degradation! O! may the hope yet be entertained that we may recover the likeness of the Deity?

3. Finally, felicitous as the emotional constitution of the divine nature undoubtedly is, it is evidently one under the operation of which every one must see wisely to his own interest. It will be a sad fallacy for us to think that God's ruling passion is a delight in happiness, and to infer that all creatures will consequently be happy, be and do what they may. Alas! no. God's ruling passion is not a love of happiness, but a love of righteousness; and to this, if the misconduct of creatures should create such a necessity, the love of happiness will be subordinated. Those who will be holy shall be happy; none else. Happiness, in God's moral administration, cannot exist alone; it is closely linked with holiness, without whose presence and support it withers and expires. You cannot sever this connexion. The unholy must be miserable. The bright aspect of God's purity, which affords to the holy a glow of bliss, is to the unholy "a consuming fire." O mortal, tempt it not! It burns to the lowest hell. If thou hast need of mercy, as indeed thou hast, seek it where Jesus calls thee, and where justice and grace combine to assure thee of a welcome.

HYMN.

GREAT GOD! permit an humble prayer
To know what thy best glories are;
The emotions of thy bosom tell,
"The beauty of the Lord" reveal.

Thy heart is love, as mortals' are,
But not with thine may ours compare;
Thy vast, unchanging nature glows
With ardour which no seraph knows.

The right, the beautiful, the blest,
Engross the affections of thy breast:
Deep fount ! whence every feeling springs,
Out-flowing to created things.

Infinite beauty ! Mortal tongues
Aspire in vain to equal songs:
Let angels all their passions move
To sing thy glory, HOLY LOVE !

LECTURE VII.

GOD A VOLUNTARY BEING.

“The mystery of his will.”—*Ephesians* i. 9.

THE progress we have already made in acquainting ourselves with God leads naturally to the step which we are now to take. Under the guidance of the Sacred Word, we have found God to be an infinite, necessary, and complex Spirit, and, as a spirit, to be endowed with capabilities of knowledge and emotion. Having regarded God as an intelligent and emotional being, we now proceed to contemplate him as a voluntary one. Our present subject is “the mystery of his WILL.”

In the treatment of this subject, I shall endeavour, first, to EXPLAIN THE GENERAL CONCEPTION of the will of God ; secondly, to INDICATE ITS PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS ; and, thirdly, to POINT OUT ITS SINGLE AND REMARKABLE LIMITATION.

I. In the first place, I shall endeavour to EXPLAIN THE GENERAL CONCEPTION of the will of God.

I shall attempt this by means of a reference to ourselves. It is the natural tendency of feeling, when excited in us, to lead to action. We ordinarily use efforts to obtain what we desire, to avoid what we fear, to repel an assault, to avenge an injury. But our feelings do not *always* lead to action ; on the contrary, there are many instances in which we feel, in which nevertheless we *do* nothing. This may be, either because our feelings are slight, and so not of sufficient strength to impel us to action ; or because our feelings are

antagonistic, and so neutralize one another, as to the production of action, by their mutual conflict; or because we ourselves make an effort to modify and subdue them, so that they may not lead to action, but that this, their natural tendency, may in the particular case be counteracted.

The last class of cases introduces to our notice a new and distinct power, of remarkable character and of great importance. There is something that interposes between my feelings and the action which, if nothing interposed, would be the natural and certain result of them; something that judges of the quality of my feelings, whether they be worthy of being carried into effect or not, and finally determines that they shall or shall not be so. What, or I might rather say, *who* is this? For it seems as though there were some mysterious person here stepping in, and modifying, or even arresting, a course of sequences otherwise direct and inevitable. The faculty which is thus interposed between the feelings and their resulting action is *will*. After the feelings have been excited, there is required an exercise of the will, an act of volition or determination, before action can take place; and this exercise of the will lies with that mysterious personage, myself, who, conscious of my own feelings, and passing judgment upon them, either for repression or indulgence, ultimately determines what shall be done.

Allow me to illustrate this general statement by an example. I am, let it be supposed, in circumstances in which I may with impunity commit a robbery—say, steal a sum of money. The possession of this money is on various grounds attractive to me, and my desires are excited towards it; I do not take it, however. Why? Because I sit in judgment on those excited feelings, condemn them as wrong, and by proper considerations correct and suppress them; and I consequently determine to let the money alone. Or suppose I have received an injury, which kindles my resentment, indeed, but which I am strongly disposed to forgive. Again I sit in judgment on those feelings; I approve them, and determine to forgive the injury accordingly. In each case my will comes into exercise, and its exercise is interposed between my feelings and the action towards which they lead.

Now it is natural to suppose something analogous to this in the divine Being. His emotional ardour of holy, com-

placent, and benevolent, love, must be conceived to supply in him, as emotions do in us, impulses to action; impulses, however, which operate, not immediately, but through the intervention of his will. The will of God is too frequently spoken of in Scripture to make it needful for me to quote particular passages as justifying this representation. Sometimes, indeed, the term has relation to his preceptive will, or his will as expressed in order to mark out our duty; but it often refers also to his attitude of determination, of which the text itself is an example: "Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." It appears, therefore, that God, like man, has a will, and, like man, determines thereby the course of his action.

Well speaks the apostle, however, of "the mystery" of God's will. Will is a mystery in ourselves. It seems to imply the existence of a kind of separate, or detached, personality, of which it is exceedingly difficult to frame to ourselves a theoretical conception, but of which an irresistible practical evidence is afforded to us by our consciousness. It is not my will that determines my actions, it is I myself that determine them, and that guide my will to the volitions by which my actions are regulated: for the will itself has no voluntary power; it is a mere piece of mental machinery placed under my regulation and control, and, like a mechanical spring, acting precisely according to the pressure under which it is placed. Such is the machinery, however, which does constitute, and which is absolutely necessary in order to constitute, a voluntary being. Without this power of interposing to prevent the immediate operation of our feelings on the will, nothing could exist but physical action. The processes of the mind would at once be assimilated to those of the body, and the will might be classed with the power of digestion, or even with the chemical affinities. Man's emotional nature, indeed, might, under such a condition, be without exaggeration compared to a quantity of unprotected gunpowder, perilously open to every spark which might fall upon it, and liable at any instant to an explosion which no hand could either arrest or control.

At the same time, it is manifest that the possession of this self-regulating power, while, on the one hand, absolutely necessary to the constitution of a voluntary being, is, on the

other, a prerogative of the noblest kind. It is one of the respects, doubtless, in which God created man after his own image; and, if in this instance man, after a lowly manner, bears the likeness of God, it follows that God, after a more glorious manner, bears the likeness of man.

This observation itself, even if we go no farther, opens to us a grand and wonderful view of God. We now contemplate him as exercising choice, for it is of choice that acts of volition are expressive. Displayed before him by his infinite knowledge are all the possible modes of his action, and his emotional nature they kindle into corresponding excitement. To which of them shall he give a substantial being? Not to all, for then his works would be infinite; not necessarily to any one, for then there would be no guarantee of its being the most worthy of himself; then to which of them? The whole multitude of them awaits his choice; out of them he will select such as shall best approve themselves to him, and these shall become the objects of his will. Imagine so vast and glorious a being engaged in this marvellous process of selection! Imagine this selection guided by an emotional nature so excellent—the love of the right, the beautiful, and the blest! And trace it out to its expression in the will of God, a will which infinite wisdom and almighty power so promptly and so perfectly obey!

I am quite aware that, in thus speaking of God, I indulge myself in a certain impropriety of language, because I speak of what, as conceived by us, involves succession of time, an idea inapplicable to God, who is eternal, and whose consciousness, therefore, has no succession. The best remedy for this infirmity of human thought and language, is to familiarize ourselves with a distinction which has been found at once necessary and just, namely, a distinction between the order of time and the order of nature. In the order of nature one thing may precede another, when there is no antecedence in time; as, for example, in the order of nature the application of the spark precedes the explosion of gunpowder, although in the order of time the two events are simultaneous. And still more with respect to the operations of mind, acts which have not a successive existence in the order of time must often be regarded as successive in the order of nature. It is only by carrying this distinction along with us in our contemplation of the divine Being that we, who live, and move,

and have our being in time, can, with any approach to propriety, conduct our conceptions of him "that inhabiteth eternity." With him, assuredly, is no succession in order of time; but without assuming succession in the order of nature we cannot speak of him at all.

II. From this attempt to explain the general conception of the will of God, I shall now pass on to a consideration of ITS DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS. For greater clearness I shall use a negative form of expression.

First, the will of God is *not under restraint*. This cannot be said of the will of any created beings. Within whatsoever limit a freedom of choice may be allowed to them, the sphere of their freedom has its limits which cannot be passed; and even within these limits the will of creatures, however sovereign, is always subject to the control of a higher will, the Creator's, whenever he shall be pleased to exert it. Such a restraining power is necessary to the completeness of God's supremacy, the due order of his government, and the secure fulfilment of his designs. But under no restraint is the will of God himself. A sphere of action altogether boundless belongs to him, and his resolves are beyond control. By whom, indeed, could any control over them be exercised? Who possesses an influence that could be brought to bear upon them? Who can reach them? Who is acquainted with them? The infinity of his nature places him at an immeasurable elevation above all such attempts, and confers on him the prerogative of a will altogether supreme. In this high position God is alone. Not only are the most exalted creatures far beneath him, but mankind have failed to embody this attribute even in their gods. The host of pagan deities were subject to Jupiter, and Jupiter himself to fate. For us fate is the will of God, and his purposes are the irrevocable decrees written in the book of destiny.

Secondly, the will of God is *not under law*. It characterizes all voluntary beings besides that they are under authoritative rule, and that there is some standard to which they are under an obligation to conform. They find themselves not occupying an isolated position, but related to beings above, around, or beneath them, in such manner as requires a correspondence in their regard. There is something which they *ought* to be. A voice with the force and sanction of law addresses them, and commands them to be

such. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour." Thus it is the business of all rational creatures to see that their will accords with their obligations, and to yield herein obedience to an authority above them. But it is not so with God. He is emphatically "without law," or, if his nature may be said to have a law, he is "a law unto himself." Whatever his purposes may be, he has only to carry them into execution; it is enough that they are his own, for he has only himself to satisfy, there being none to require a modification of them, or to call him to account for them. By whom, indeed, could such an account be required? To whom does he owe anything, that it may be repaid him? Who is entitled to bring him under obligation, or to prescribe a law to him? There can be none but a negative answer to these questions. As we now contemplate him, that is, in the formation of his eternal purposes, he exists alone, and his will cannot but be absolute.

Thirdly, the will of God is *not passionate*. Such is often, and often to a great extent, the will of man; as when it is exercised without information on the one hand, or without consideration on the other. We have not unfrequently to make up our minds in ignorance, or with a very partial and unsatisfactory knowledge of the facts by which our resolution should be guided; and, perhaps, still more frequently we resolve without a full consideration of the knowledge we possess. Hence our will may too often be spoken of as expressive of feeling rather than judgment, as passionate rather than enlightened; and the actions to which it leads are accordingly ill adapted and useless, if not rash and mischievous. The will of God, however, is not passionate. "His understanding is infinite," and he can have encountered no circumstances obliging him to act under the impulse of unenlightened feeling. Every resolution of his has been taken in the clearest light, and amidst the most vivid perceptions of all the considerations by which it should have been influenced. Nor has he been inconsiderate. No fitting argument has been neglected by him because his will was absolute, and he could do whatever he pleased. On the contrary, deep thoughts have engaged him, thoughts of profoundest counsel, selecting the best ends, employing the best instruments, and arranging the best combinations, which his resources could supply. No: his will is not blind; it is infi-

nately wise. He walks in light; and, however that light may be too intense for our gaze, or may be shrouded by a darkness which we cannot pierce so that we call it mystery, all is luminous to him. His will is but wisdom embodied in resolution.

Fourthly, the will of God is *not arbitrary*. Such among men an absolute will would be in great danger of becoming, and such the will of man often does become in proportion as it is absolute. Authority proverbially begets caprice. We are to a great extent retained in the path of propriety by the restrictions more or less consciously placed on us by others, and we are prone to fall into a habit of excessive self-pleasing whenever we find ourselves at liberty really to please ourselves. In such circumstances, indeed, poor human nature sometimes sets the pleasing of itself above all other objects, and becomes grievously arbitrary. So, if to a person in possession of a little despotic power, more or less, one say, "Why will you do this? It is neither just, nor wise, nor kind;" he may get the answer, either in words or in deeds, "I do it because I like. It gratifies my self-importance, it helps me to realize my authority, it makes me know that I have power." To prevent the generation of arbitrariness where power is absolute is a matter of extreme difficulty, and requires the most energetic moral influences. It demands the highest goodness to bear to be a despot. Among men this is so little expected, that the very name despot is synonymous with tyranny. In consequence of this, in the arrangements of human society every effort is made to surround authority, where it must be conferred, with restrictions which, while permitting its influence for good, shall arrest its tendencies to evil. In this view it is a glorious thing to say of God that his will, though absolute, is not arbitrary; and, if any have deemed it so, they have greatly erred. He does what he will, indeed, but not, like a tyrant, merely because he will. He acts without control, but not without a reason. He is an absolute Sovereign, but not a self-willed one. He is above all law, but he is a more righteous Ruler than law ever portrayed. And this must be evident from the consideration that his will acts not of itself, but under the influence of his emotional nature. He intensely loves the right, the beautiful, and the happy; and therefore his will, which always acts under the guidance of these excellent

affections, is not arbitrary, but good. Knowledge has kindled holy love, and here is holy love expressed in resolution. The character of God thus stands out nobly to our view. Absolute, but not arbitrary. A despot, but not despotic. The only being whose moral goodness is equal to the sure regulation of his active powers, the only being good enough to be trusted with unrestricted rule. Absolute power, as vested in his arm, wants no fetters. His will, without qualification, may be universal law. It is as attentive to reason as though it had no authority. It is more wise and good than it would have been if the whole universe had combined to direct and to restrain it.

Fifthly, the will of God is *not vain*. Often the will of man is so. To resolve is easy, but to carry out a resolution is often difficult—often, indeed, impossible. Obstacles of various kinds and magnitudes present themselves to us, either requiring strenuous effort, or altogether insurmountable. Our will is in many cases our wish, rather than our resolution. We would if we could, but with fruitless aspirations are we obliged to content ourselves. Not such is the will of God. For all its objects it is efficient. At its behest are all the powers of his infinite nature, and with him to will and perform are one. There is, indeed, no source from whence a real obstruction can be conceived to arise. All physical powers are but developments of himself; already he acts in and by them, and he can, of course, direct them to the execution of his pleasure. And as to voluntary beings, in so far as they may be pleased to set themselves in opposition to him, his omnipotence can crush them in a moment. Who could survive the stroke of his hand? “I will work,” saith the Lord, “and who shall let it?” (Isaiah xliii. 13). Verily, there is “none that can stay thy hand, or say unto thee, What doest thou!” (Daniel iv. 35).

Sixthly, the will of God is *not vacillating*. Such often is the will of man. His resolutions are frequently formed one day to be changed the next, and his whole life may be said in great part to consist of schemes unfulfilled. To man, indeed, this is not unnatural, seeing that so many of his purposes are formed in total or in partial ignorance, or under ill-considered or ill-regulated impulses. He admits to-day that he was in error yesterday, and he will find to-morrow that he is wiser than to-day. What he resolved on in passion

he abandons when his feelings are calm; nay, through instability, he will even desert operations which were begun in wisdom, and might have been prosecuted to success. Hence the will of man is feeble, and liable to a thousand changes. But the will of God is unchangeable. His resolution, once taken, never alters. His plan, once formed, determines the progress of his work to the end. And why should the will of God be altered? How could it be altered but for the worse, since it was formed amidst the amplest knowledge, determined by the noblest motives, and embodied in the wisest arrangements? A change of any kind were a calamity immeasurable. And what should alter it? Has the course of time added to the knowledge of God an element deserving to be incorporated in it? Has the progress of his work exposed a defect in the original design? Has he encountered obstacles from which it is needful that he should turn aside? None of these things, my brethren; and therefore, as anciently declared, "the Lord is in one mind, and none can turn him" (Job xxiii. 13). "His counsel shall stand," until the accomplished work embody it in every detail, and with infinite completeness.

Such are the leading characteristics of the will of God, set forth in opposition to the will of man. It is neither under restraint, nor under law; it is neither passionate, nor arbitrary; it is neither vain, nor vacillating. It is supreme and absolute; it is wise and good; it is efficient and unchangeable.

III. Having thus endeavoured to explain the general conception of the will of God, and to indicate its leading peculiarities, I proceed, in the third place, to consider a very remarkable LIMITATION TO WHICH IT IS SUBJECTED.

After the high and glorious characteristics which have just been ascribed to the will of God, it may strike you with surprise, perhaps, that I should speak of a limitation of any kind as attaching to it. What should seem so natural as that the will of God should be the determining element of universal action? And, if there be a restriction on it, by whom can that restriction be imposed?

Let me here recall to your remembrance that, in speaking of God as a voluntary being, I have spoken of him as in this respect analogous to ourselves. There are, then, besides God, other voluntary beings, also endowed with will, or a

mechanism productive of voluntary action. Not ourselves only, but all intelligent beings are so. And, as we are thus made in the likeness of God in being endowed with will, so it is necessary that there should be a scope for the exercise of our will, as there is a scope for his. Not, indeed, so wide a scope, but still a scope, proportionate and adapted to the powers of our being; a sphere in which freedom of choice, and an exercise of the will determined by ourselves, shall belong to us. How is this to be, however, if God's will pervades all, and rules all? It is, of course, only by God's own consent and arrangement that it can be so, since no creature could challenge such a sphere of liberty for himself. It is, indeed, only by a marvellous exercise of his power and skill that it can be so, since the beings who are thus to be independent in action are still to be dependent in existence on his sustaining power. But by divine power and skill it is, no doubt, possible, and by divine condescension it has been consented to and arranged. God subjects himself to restriction in the exercise of his own will, in order that he may afford a scope for the exercise of ours. Assigning a sphere for our voluntary action, he himself thenceforth withdraws from it, and leaves it to us, entering into it no more by direct operation of his will, but appealing to us for its due regulation by words of authority and persuasion.

The object of the limitation to which God has thus subjected his own will is obvious. It is not that there may be a spot in his dominions over which he shall not rule, but that, in a spot adapted for it, he may establish a kind of rule new, and otherwise impossible. With this single exception his dominion is one of force. All things act as he, directly or indirectly, acts upon them, and their actings are but the reflection and results of his own. Everything may be said to obey him—the winds and the rain, the sun and the stars; but nothing renders him an intelligent and voluntary obedience, or offers him an intentional homage. Would it have been well to have contented himself with such a universe—himself alone free, and the universe in chains? Was it not a noble thought to emancipate some of his creatures, in order that he might constitute a sphere for the exercise of a higher species of authority, and find an opportunity for receiving a better tribute of praise? Behold, then, creation's freemen; beings who, within their allotted sphere, can choose as freely,

and act as independently, as God himself; beings who, with vast motives set before them, may yet resist their influence, and refuse the request they enforce; beings who, if they yield, yield only because they are convinced and approve. From no other portion of his works can God receive such honour as from these.

It is true that, in seeking for such honour, he may seem to be exposing himself to needless humiliation. Why should he who can control all things subject himself to refusal and dishonour? Why should he ask who may compel? Why should the Almighty Creator permit himself to be trampled upon by a feeble worm? Is it not placing a worm too high, and needlessly humbling himself to his creatures? That such a system places created beings very high must certainly be admitted, but there yet remains a way in which, even on the supposition of their disobedience, the honour of the Creator may be vindicated. Disobedience may be followed by effective punishment, and by a fitting retribution the whole shame of it may be thrown on the transgressor. The stroke of God's arm can vindicate the excellency of his law, and even demonstrate the stability of his throne.

I have here, in a few words, laid bare the foundation of God's moral government. It takes its rise in this self-imposed limitation of God's will. We now find scattered around us the elements of which it consists, and have only to group them together in order to constitute the entire system. With an intelligent being to whom is assigned a sphere of independent action, there is clear scope for authority and command, for requirements and recompense. And upon the same basis the evangelical system, as a system of blended moral probation and sovereign grace, satisfactorily reposes.

The plan of my discourse I have thus completed. In quest of an enlarged acquaintance with God, I have treated of "the mystery of his will;" first, by explaining the general conception of it; secondly, by indicating the peculiar characteristics of it; and, thirdly, by remarking a signal limitation of it.

1. I call upon you, then, for profound admiration. We have lately contemplated the emotional nature of God, and surveyed the primary affections of that marvellous Being whose nature is holy love. We learn now that these affections are not wasted. Holiness, complacency, and benevo-

lence, propagate their quickening influences to the will of God, and embody themselves in unnumbered purposes of action in which they shall be substantially manifested. And the will of God is equal to its office. Can more be said of it, or more than this be conceived?

2. If the will of God be what I have represented it, what, then, is the universe? In its entire physical aspect it is the will of God in execution; not only in worlds created, but in all the changes which are unceasingly effected in them. Beyond the sphere allotted to the voluntary action of creatures, all is of God, and every occurrence is a part of his will, not as cherished in his bosom, but as accomplished by his hand. It is the will of God as it is done. No accidents are there, although we often call them such; nor are second causes there in any such sense as to detach events from the great first cause. How solemnly should this be recognized in all things that occur to us! How tranquillizing in trying circumstances would such a recollection be! In disappointment, in sickness, in insult, in danger, to have to say, "It is the Lord!" And why should not his children be able to add, "The will of the Lord be done"? A will supreme and absolute, indeed, but a will infinitely wise and good, though sin has gathered black clouds of mystery around the path of its accomplishment, and even mercy bids us wait for the entire dissipation of the gloom. His will is both efficient and immutable, and his way, if hidden, is perfect: for thus saith the Lord, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah xlv. 10).

3. God, as a voluntary being, is a being subject to the exercise of a moral judgment. As voluntary beings we are so. Since we will what we do, we become liable thereby to a moral estimation as either right or wrong, good or evil. Nor can it be otherwise with our Maker. He acts according to his will; and, had it so been that his choice had fallen on measures unholy or unjust, had he become the perpetrator or the patron of impurity and untruth, nothing could have saved him from the censure even of his own creatures. He has made us to sit in judgment, not on ourselves only, but on others; and the mechanism he has formed would, however painfully, have recoiled upon himself. What an unspeakable happiness it is that the will of God is so infinitely wise and good, the embodiment of holy love! The moral estimation

in which we have to hold him thus fully corresponds with our estimate of his physical glory.

4. By some of the characteristics of the will of God an admirable example is set to us. His will, although supreme and absolute, is neither passionate nor arbitrary; it is, on the contrary, wise and good. Nay, although it might have been universally operative, it is voluntarily subjected to limitation for the attainment of a morally excellent end. How prone we are to pride ourselves, if we are placed in a position in which some remote shadow of God's supreme and absolute will belongs to us! How prone to become self-willed and arbitrary! There is scarcely anything we so quickly resent as an attempt to impose a restriction on our will, and, perhaps, no object for which we would voluntarily fetter it. To rule seems to be the height of human ambition. God himself shows us a higher glory. In his judgment, if it be an honour to rule, it is a greater honour to rule well. If it be a high prerogative to be supreme and absolute, it is a more exalted excellence to listen to the dictates of wisdom, and imbibe the spirit of love. Nay, it is greater to solicit concurrence than to compel, and more honourable to prevail by persuasion than by force. When shall men once learn to imitate their Maker, and poor worms of the earth aspire to clothe themselves with honour after the pattern of the Almighty?

HYMN.

ACCEPT, O Lord, the praise we bring,
While thy unfolding name we sing;
Thy power to choose as well as feel,
The glorious mystery of thy will.

Thy will's supreme, and spurns control;
'Tis absolute, nor knows a rule;
Yet owns the light which guides thy ways,
The love which fires thy breast obeys.

How wise and good thy counsels are!
How well secured their issue fair!
Thy will, not breathed in wishes vain,
Ne'er varies from its scope again.

In sphere assigned 'tis ours to choose,
To obey thy precepts, or refuse;
From thence thy will supreme withdraws,
To rule our hearts by righteous laws.

LECTURE VIII.

GOD AN ACTIVE BEING.

“This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts who is . . . excellent in working.”—*Isaiah* xxviii. 29.

FROM the consideration of God as an intelligent, emotional, and voluntary being, we naturally proceed to contemplate him as an ACTIVE one.

Activity is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a spirit. Matter is inert, acting only as it is acted upon, and in its action, however varied, only reflecting and propagating the force exerted upon it. In this respect spirit contrasts with matter; it is capable of spontaneous action. The activity of a spirit may be viewed in two aspects; as either internal, or external. The internal action of a spirit is exhibited in the exercise of its varied faculties—in thought, emotion, will—and in the operation of that mysterious personality to which is confided the regulation of these; the external activity of a spirit is to be traced in the effects produced by it beyond itself, whether by means of corporeal powers, such as those possessed by us, or without them. It is to this latter kind of action that we now refer, in speaking of the activity of God, the former having been, in substance, already dwelt upon. It is to be observed, however, that the action of God, even in the creation of the universe, cannot be strictly said to have been external to himself, inasmuch as his nature is infinite, and the whole universe is locally within him. Here, as elsewhere, the analogy between the finite and the infinite fails.

A remarkable change now takes place in the object of our contemplation. Hitherto we have been inquiring into the unseen, and endeavouring, with hallowed caution, but not without a competent guide, to penetrate the secrets of the divine nature; but now we begin to look not so directly at himself as his works, in order to learn what he is by contemplating what he has done. This is, in part at least, open to our knowledge, and will present to us a more accessible field of observation. My method will be, first, TO GLANCE

AT THE WORKS OF GOD as cognizable by us ; secondly, TO INDICATE THE MOTIVE to which they may be ascribed ; and, thirdly, TO OBSERVE THE RELATION between the two.

I. Take with me, then, dear brethren, in the first place, A GLANCE AT THE WORKS OF GOD.

The works of God ! Who knows them ? Assuredly they are vast beyond the ken of mortal eye, or reach of mortal thought ; and these that lie around us are but infinitesimal portions of them, "the small dust of the balance" as compared with his entire operations. Every instrument of knowledge we possess, whether natural or artificial, whatever the amount of information with which it supplies us, confesses its inability to embrace the whole. With that which can be known, however, we must needs content ourselves, and we may rejoice that the limited scene thus presented to us is rich in beauty.

A survey of the works of God naturally divides itself into two portions ; the one comprehending the *creation* of the universe, and the other its *administration*.

1. The created universe presents to us two leading aspects ; it is either organic, or inorganic. Organic nature includes the vegetable, sentient, and rational kingdoms ; inorganic nature, the substances of which the worlds themselves consist.

Let us glance, then, in the first place, at inorganic nature. See the ground on which we tread—the fruitful soil which so extensively constitutes the surface, and either spontaneously presents a nourishing pasture, or gratefully repays to man his destined toil—the sparkling streams which, gushing from the heart of mountains whose lofty tops drink, like so many mouths, at the atmospheric deep, and, leaping in gem-like brilliancy from rock to rock as they bid a laughing adieu to the parental bosom, at once refresh and fertilize the expectant vales—the "great and wide sea," the mother of all waters, and the capacious receptacle of her multitudinous offspring, when, as with a filial affection, they return after their many wanderings to their home—and the "curiously wrought" substances below, on the faces of which are inscribed, as with a graving tool, the records of powers and changes the deciphering of which overtaxes all human ingenuity ; in the bosom of which are found incalculable treasures conducive to the wealth, the ornament, and the comfort, of man ; and throughout the entire breadth of which

are to be seen the footsteps of those marvellous affinities, which seem, as with a lover's tact, to discern and select their kindred elements. To adopt the language of the prophet which I have taken for our text, "This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in working."

Or lift up your eyes to the starry heavens, and look on those bright orbs with which this seemingly opaque earth is so nearly connected, and to which, with all its apparent differences, it is in reality so similar. Gaze upon the sun that rules the day, the burning glory of its noon, or the milder yet richer beauties of its morning and its evening beams; on the moon that rules the night, with her ever-changing face of cold but welcome loveliness; on the glittering globes which, when the gorgeous sun that proudly eclipses them retires to rest, blaze out of the dark abyss, and cheer the illuminated night with a silent music not unworthy of their angelic beauty. Count their number, tell their names, if either the one or the other be known to you. Or observe the stately march which, at the bidding of him that placed them there, these marshalled hosts pursue—the steps of Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades. Say where that wanderer goes, who, quitting the beaten road, darts into space with all but an unmeasurable rapidity, and leaves coming generations to speculate on the chances of his return. Investigate, if you be able, the secrets of these shining worlds; tell if, like the sun, each has a family group embosomed in its impenetrable radiance, or if, like the earth, each is a home, the theatre of conscious being, of love and sorrow, hopes and fears. How strangely the scene develops itself when the telescope supplies its powerful aid to your eye; when a little cloud of light opens into an assemblage of majestic worlds, and specks of brightness, apparently stationary, exhibit the complex movements of a mazy dance! Yet even the telescope mortifies while it delights you; for, though unveiling old worlds and discovering new, instead of leading you to a sensible verge of creation, it shows you that the regions beyond are still populated, and makes you pine for more penetrating vision. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in working."

But turn now from inorganic to organic nature; a department of labour in which, if God (as is assuredly probable) has glorified himself in other worlds, it is in this world alone that we can observe his works.

Of the forms in which organic nature presents itself to us, the simplest is that which is without sensation. I refer, of course, to the vegetable kingdom, the organization of which, however, though constituting the humblest form of life, is of extreme beauty. It is much that it is a form of *life*, that mysterious thing which, while manifesting itself by so many effects, itself so completely evades discovery; which holds the elements of organic substance together in contradiction to, and in defiance of, the affinities which everywhere else prevail; and which, at a single step, makes so wide a difference between the two worlds which it divides. But who shall tell the wonders of vegetable life in particular? Concealed within every plant, the microscope has discovered processes of singular elegance and admirable skill, conducive alike to the production of herbs and fruits, at once for the sustenance of a higher life, and the purification of that æri-form element by which it must be sustained. It may be said to be the office of the vegetable organization, not only to cover a globe, else naked, with a beauty of which the eye never wearies, but to convert stones into food, and poison into health. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in working."

When we glance at sentient organization we find that another great step has been achieved. The animal *feels*, and lives in a sense as yet new to us. Its existence, however lowly, is to it a conscious pleasure, with liabilities, however, to pain. It has wants to be provided for, and it is stimulated to avail itself of the supply which has been prepared for them. And this life of feeling, through how vast a region it extends! The animal frame itself is of almost infinite diversity, and exhibits a most beautiful gradation. Commencing with the very simplest form, each step in advance seems to be taken by combining the antecedent forms, and so making the superior creatures, as it were, aggregates of those below them. The mechanism thus employed constitutes an inexhaustible theme of admiration, while the purposes subserved by its several arrangements, under the direction of specific instincts, are equally various and excellent. On every hand this sentient life is found. It heaves beneath our feet, in the creatures that find their home in the soil. It animates the waters, which are variously peopled at once by the smallest and the largest of the living tribes. It roams over the earth,

from the burning equator to the snowy poles. It swarms in the air, from the buzzing insect to the soaring eagle. And it seems as though busy science, with all its industry, must expire, before philosophers shall have succeeded in registering all its forms.

To the sentient must be added intelligent and rational life. What estimate shall we form of this? Man, with an organized corporeal system allied to the brute, and a rational spirit as nearly allied to the angel! A being that can know, think, resolve; and that can act in such a manner as to be judged by his own conscience, and ruled by the laws of his Maker! What wondrous spiritual mechanism is here! And what marvellous arrangements have been made for the being whom it distinguishes! He is made earth's sovereign, and all things are put under his feet. A home is prepared for him, to contain the objects of his tenderest regards, and to be cheered by the exercise of conjugal and filial love; a sphere of social attachments is created for him, in which his kindly affections may expand and rejoice; and the wide world itself is assigned as a theatre to him, for the prosecution of his plans and the development of his powers. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in working."

What an immense field of glory we have thus glanced at, a field in which power, skill, benignity, are indeed conspicuously displayed; yet this is but a fragment—ah! what must be the whole? And this God's work, his creation. What a wonderful deed! And God's first deed! Glorious day, when all this beauty was formed out of nothing, or rather when all these thoughts of his heart received at the hands of God their substantial existence.

2. It is time, however, that we turn from this cursory view of the universe itself, to notice, as we must in a manner equally cursory, the divine administration of it.

The physical support of the universe is, of necessity, to be ascribed to God. As it could not have come into being uncreated, so neither could it continue in being unsustained. Hence God is said by the apostle to "uphold all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews i. 3); nor do I know that any practical distinction can be drawn between the power that created and the power that sustains. What are called the laws of nature are but modes of the will of God, or God

himself in action; since second causes can have no independent existence, but must be in perpetual relation with the first cause. Imagine, then, this incessant exertion of divine power.

The providential direction of the universe lies equally with God. He has abandoned nothing to chance. Amidst so many and such complicated movements, chance must soon have been anarchy; with such an infinite number of wants, chance must soon have been destitution and woe. It had been cruel to have created such a universe and to have deserted it—an orphanage more desolate than that of an abandoned child. But it is not so. The Creator's wisdom still guides the stars in their courses, and instructs the unsteady sun in his daily time. With bountiful hand he stands ready to supply every want, and with tender heart he listens to every cry. He superintends all things, and orders every event. When he bids we begin to breathe, when he bids we expire. He does according to his pleasure among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth.

The moral government of God must be added to his providential administration; I mean his government of mankind by precept and persuasion. This kind of government is founded in that voluntary limitation of his supreme will which was illustrated in my last Lecture, and it gives rise to new and most interesting developments of his character. It consists of a system of experimental trial, and is carried out by arrangements wisely, and even delicately, adapted to its purpose; commands proportioned to man's capacity, motives adapted to man's heart, and modes of retribution expressive of equal justice. The administration of such a system is effected by constant and minute attention, in order that every fact may be observed, and that every act and intention may be correctly estimated. Conceive of God, then, incessantly watching every voluntary agent, and searching at one and the same time the secrets of innumerable hearts, in preparation for the great day of judgment to come. This is his attitude as the moral governor.

A redeeming interposition on behalf of a guilty world terminates God's administration of the universe, so far as it is laid open to us. His sovereign compassion has been exercised towards us. In our low estate of ruin by sin he has had pity on us, and has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the

world. He has done this, indeed, in a spirit of overflowing grace. He has made no exceptions. He has hesitated at no sacrifice. He has withheld no privilege. He has carried his remedy down to the very depths of our misery, and he means to lift us up to the highest pinnacle of glory, in order that he may be magnified in the exercise of his mercy as illustriously as in that of his other attributes. His acts of loving-kindness are to be worthy of himself. His grace, however, is blended with justice. His system of moral government was righteous, and so shall his method of salvation be. In the expiation for sin offered upon Calvary he exhibits a sustained righteousness from which he never swerves. In this method he is at once a just God and a Saviour. In his richest grace he still rules. He commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and his proclamation of mercy runs in terms of authority,—“He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned” (Matthew xxviii. 19).

The divine administration of the universe has thus presented itself to us in successive departments, relating respectively to physical, sentient, and rational existence. Vast and wonderful is each department, while each rises above the former in its scope and excellency, and glorious beyond conception is the whole. “This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is excellent in working.”

Most painfully do I feel the superficial and cursory character of the view which I have thus been able to present to you of the works of God—it is rather a glance towards them than a survey of them; but our time has permitted no more. The passing view which we have taken, however, will be sufficient to answer our present purpose, which is not to investigate the works of God, which themselves would occupy many discourses, but to exhibit God himself in action.

II. I proposed, as the second part of my discourse, to INDICATE THE MOTIVE TO WHICH THE WORKS OF GOD MAY BE ASCRIBED. Let us now address ourselves to this inquiry.

Speaking generally, or rather universally, it may be said that there is no voluntary action without an appropriate cause, or corresponding impulse, in the bosom of the agent. As emotion is the proper stimulus to action, so action may safely, and must necessarily, be referred back to emotion as its source. Looking, then, at the creation and administra-

tion of the universe as a grand series of voluntary actions on the part of God, and as necessarily originating in some corresponding impulse of his emotional nature, our inquiry is, to what affection of the divine mind these actions may be traced. Now, in considering the emotional nature of God, we found that, according to Scripture, it resolves itself into holiness, complacency, and benevolence; or an essential delight in rectitude, in loveliness, and in happiness: in other words, a love of beauty, physical, conscious, and moral. This love of beauty, consequently, must have been the parent impulse of the divine activity, the spring which set to work (if I may be allowed the expression) the infinite energies of the Godhead. There is, in truth, no other motive to be assigned, since in God there was from eternity no other moving power. In what manner, then, or to what end, may we conceive this motive to act?

The answer to this question is twofold. In the first place, the divine love of beauty may have impelled to action as a method of producing objects that should be to God reflections of himself, and of his own excellences.

As we conceive God's complacent love to be fixed with infinite intensity on the excellences of his own nature, and with a peculiar delight on these excellences as reflected to his view in the persons of the sacred Trinity, so we conceive that with a proportionate delight he would contemplate the same excellences as partially reflected to his view by other beings. It is, of course, obvious that no other being could reflect, either all his perfections as a whole, or any one among them perfectly; but in part they may do so, and in equal measure they may engage the divine complacency, and so augment the divine felicity. Now we know that, in part, the works of nature do reflect the divine perfections, that every object or being which exists bears in some measure the image of its Maker, and that thus the entire creation is to God, as it were, a mirror of himself. If there be brilliancy of conception or beauty of form, if there be wisdom of combination or skill of management, if there be grandeur of design or simplicity of means, if there be vastness of power or gentleness of manipulation, if there be pleasurable feeling or dependent liberty, all this is God's—nay, it is God himself, embodied in his works, and exhibited by them. Here he sees himself, and in the contemplation may be conceived to

be the subject of an emotion akin to that which is expressed by the sacred writer when he says—"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis i. 31). For the sake of such a sight, we may conceive, or for the pleasure of beholding himself reflected in so many forms, he made the worlds.

In the second place, God's love of the beautiful may have supplied a motive to action, as a method of realizing his own conceptions of beauty in forms additional to the excellences of his own nature. Of all God's works it must be deemed that the prototypes were eternally in his own bosom. Even with us all worthy works are conceived before they are executed, and exist in thought before they exist in substance. So sculpture, painting, poetry, and mechanical art, have but the function of bringing into form the ideas of the artist, and it is the glory of his hand to be able to give body to the efforts of his imagination. If there arise within him noble and beautiful thoughts in which he delights, he delights yet more in giving them substance—in depicting them on canvas, in gravings them on marble, in recording them in song. If this artistic passion be the likeness of God in us, we may trace a corresponding likeness of ourselves in God. He is doubtless the great artist of the universe. Having from all eternity in his mind conceptions of infinite beauty, physical and sentient, intelligent and moral, it was not for him (so to speak) to leave them there for ever unexpressed. It would be a natural and a godlike gratification to him to see those thoughts embodied, and to adorn unnumbered worlds with beauties so divine. Therefore did he make all things; and "for his glory they are, and were created" (Revelation iv. 11).

We have thus arrived, I think, at a conception of the universe which may be fairly called beautiful. It is the artistic embodiment of divine thoughts, for the purpose of presenting them in a concrete form to their Author; the reflected exhibition to him, in a thousand forms of partial resemblance of excellences which, combined in himself, are a part of his infinite and eternal glory.

As a theory of the universe, I do not know that anything can be more beautiful than this. It is not with framing a theory of the universe, however, that we must content ourselves; our subject is a practical one, and our theory

itself must be put to the test of fact and experience. It remains for us, therefore,

III. In the third place, to CONSIDER THE RELATION BETWEEN THE FACT AND THE THEORY.

I have here to concern myself with two questions: the first is, whether the motive to which I have assigned the creation of the universe is sufficient to account for it; the second is, whether the universe as it exists corresponds with the motive I have assigned.

With respect to the first of these questions, I do not see how any doubt can be entertained. God's entire emotional nature is delight in rectitude, in beauty, in happiness, and at the command of this emotional nature all his active and productive powers must necessarily be; so that, if the universe present only forms of physical, sentient, and moral beauty, the motive assigned must be deemed amply sufficient for the effect.

The second question is more important, and more difficult.

Does the universe as actually existing accord with the motive we have assigned? And can it, viewed in all its aspects, be satisfactorily resolved into such an origin?

I am aware that, if I chose to use the prerogative which in this place belongs to me, that of selecting my own illustrations, I might make out an excellent and apparently irrefragable case; I should not, however, by such a course meet the just requirements of the argument, or give satisfaction to well-informed and candid hearers, and I will not pursue it. I know to what quarter the thoughtful eye is directed, and that the question ready to be proposed is this—What can be said of the vast amount of physical and moral evil—of suffering, of death, of sin, of hell? Are these beautiful? Or would a being actuated supremely and exclusively by the love of the beautiful have either produced or permitted them?

I am far from trifling with this question, and I am not going to give it an off-hand answer. I admit the difficulty of the problem; a problem which has occurred to thoughtful men in all ages, and has in all ages been felt a trying one. Amidst the clearest light of revelation, it has not pleased God to give us a brief and categorical solution of it; on the contrary, while he has made so many things plain, he has left this as if in studied obscurity. I shall, however, offer some observations, for which I solicit a candid reception.

I am treating a grave difficulty, and I observe, first, that *something may be said in mitigation of its pressure*. It is not quite so great a difficulty as it appears. As, according to a common proverb, it is not all gold that glitters, so it is not everything that is adduced in the way of objection that is really formidable.

The difficulty, then, arises from the existence of evil, physical and moral, in the works of a being affirmed to be holy and benevolent. To speak first of physical evil. This is a term by which we must not suffer ourselves to be misled. Physical evil is pain, nothing more; nor is pain anything more or worse than pain, because it is thus in a pregnant phrase called *evil*. What we have to deal with under this conception is simply pain. Now pain is, to some extent, naturally incident to sentient existence, and inseparable from it. It is the requisite index to the wants of animal life, and the not less requisite stimulus to their supply. Hunger is pain, and a pain without which animals would never take the trouble to procure their food, or even to eat it. How absurdly animal life would have been constituted, if the sensation produced by the process of starvation had been an agreeable one! A similar observation may be made respecting the other appetites. Again, pain is a necessary index to the dangers of animal life, and an equally necessary impulse to the avoidance of them. What creature would avoid the fire, if burning caused no pain? Amidst so many occasions of mischief, no animal could be safe without the admonitions for which its susceptibility of pain provides. And, if pain has its uses in the animal world, it has a still ampler range of beneficial influence in the rational world. What an infinite number of important and indispensable lessons are taught us by pain, even from our infancy! What child would ever walk carefully if it did not hurt him to fall, or avoid handling a knife if it did not hurt him to be cut? How many lives would be sacrificed in the streets, if it were a sensation of pleasure to be thrown down by horses, and trampled to death! Again, pain has its uses to us as a moral teacher. How many learn the folly of vice by the misery to which it leads! Did drunkenness, idleness, and dishonesty, bring no sufferings, many of the most telling lessons in favour of the opposite virtues would be lost. So, again, the torment of inflamed and ill-directed passions is one of the strongest inducements to the watchful discipline of the heart.

Similar remarks will apply to moral evil, so far as it consists in suffering. To a voluntary being pain is an appropriate and necessary intimation of what is morally wrong. While it is fit that the holy and the happy should be linked together, it is no less fit that the sinful should be divided from the holy by a distinct and palpable boundary of pain. Hence the congruity, and even the necessity, of the sensitiveness of man's conscience, and the aptitude of his passions to painful excitement. Moral being were nearly at an end if wrong were as pleasurable as right, and obligation reduced to a theorem unenforced by distinctive recompenses. The penal issues of God's moral government, however awful, are in this view necessary parts of the system itself, which, without them would be a method, not so much of persuasion, as of coaxing, and would lose at once all claim to respect.

With respect to moral evil as consisting in sin, I would speak with the utmost caution and reverence. I know it to be the hardest part of the problem, and I am far from presuming to offer a professed solution of it. I do not think, however, that it is incapable of mitigation by a remark similar to those which I have just made. To a system of moral probation, or an experimental testing of voluntary agents, it was clearly necessary that both the alternatives in which the experiment might conceivably issue should be practically possible. If this were not so—if the tried party could not both obey and disobey at his option of either—there could be no real trial at all. And an apparent trial, with a reserved purpose that the party nominally tried should not sin, would have been a pretence scarcely less than contemptible.

In reference to the suffering involved in the work of redemption, or God's remedial interposition on behalf of mankind, this was obviously submitted to for the purpose of attaining the end it was adapted to answer; and the evidence of its necessity to that end is to be found only in the declarations of God himself. These "things of God knoweth no man; but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians ii. 11).

I do not want to take more by this class of remarks than can fairly be deduced from them. I have not brought them forward as removing, but only as mitigating, the difficulty which is under our hands. We have still evil, physical and moral, in the works of a being affirmed to be holy and

benevolent; but we have at least no gratuitous evil, no evil for the sake of evil, nor even evil through heedlessness. We have only evil as incidental to forms of being otherwise excellent, and as evolved by schemes otherwise valuable and important. The question thus assumes a mild form, and comes to be really this, whether these valuable schemes, and excellent forms of being, may afford adequate compensation for the physical and moral evil incident to them, or evolved out of them.

It is clearly possible that this may be the case, and whenever this shall be proved to be actually the case, the difficulty will entirely disappear; but, even if it cannot as yet be proved, the difficulty, as thus placed on its true ground and reduced to its proper dimensions, assumes a character far less formidable than the terms in which it is nakedly expressed might imply.

I now observe, in the second place, that, of the difficulty thus mitigated, *what remains affords no basis for an argument against the holiness and benevolence of God.* It is nothing more than a difficulty attaching to a great question, the affirmative of which is decided by overwhelming evidence. That God is holy and good, is a fact demonstrated by irrefragable proofs, confirmatory of the declarations of his own word. Of his benevolence his works furnish such numberless and convincing demonstrations, that the affirmation of it, however embarrassed by the presence of suffering, cannot be overthrown by it. If there be a difficulty arising from the existence of so much suffering in the works of a benevolent Deity, a far greater difficulty would arise from the existence of so much happiness, and of so many arrangements conducive to happiness, in the works of a malignant one. And of the holiness of God even suffering itself affords the strongest collateral proof, since it stands so connected with sin as to demonstrate that, even in the mysterious act of permitting sin, he did not for a moment deviate from the course which holiness prescribed to him. Of all proofs of the holiness and goodness of God, however, at once the most affecting and the most convincing is to be found in the method of redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. Singly these attributes are manifested here in extraordinary glory. Nowhere is a display of divine mercy to be compared with the gift of his only and well-beloved Son for the salvation of a guilty world, a fact

in the presence of which the benevolence of God can be doubted no more; nowhere is an exhibition of divine justice to be compared with the satisfaction taken of the great sacrifice for the sins of the world, a fact in the presence of which the holiness of God can be doubted no more. And how near akin justice and grace are to one another, and how naturally they merge into a common sentiment of holy love, may appear from this, that one sublime fact is the grand expression of both. It is plain, therefore, too plain to be denied, that God is holy and good, and not all the sin and suffering, either of the present or the future world, can prove the contrary. They create a difficulty, but they do not overthrow our faith.

Respecting this difficulty I observe, in the third place, that *we are not in this world entitled to expect a solution of it*. If we are so, it must be either because we are entitled to expect a full solution of all difficulties, or because we are entitled to expect a full solution of this difficulty in particular. The former will scarcely be asserted. It is for God only to "dwell in light," and the light in which he dwells is declared to be to us unapproachable. It is naturally and necessarily so. We are but creatures, and very small ones too; of a very limited understanding, of a very contracted heart, and in a very infelicitous position for the comprehension of the universe. That our Maker has done us any great wrong by holding back a few of his thoughts, or by hiding a part of his ways, it would be hard to prove; but, at all events, it will be time enough to combat such a position when it has been shown that we are capable of appreciating a full discovery, should it condescendingly be proposed to us.

As to our claim to be made acquainted with this mystery in particular, upon what ground could it rest? Not on the facility of the demonstration; for, in truth, the perfect holiness and goodness of God in methods having the full scope of his infinite understanding, must be among the hardest things possible to demonstrate with an absolute clearness to any finite mind; not on its practical importance, for certainly it is of no practical importance to us to clear up all obscurities attaching to the character of God. That character we have set before us in a measure, and with a clearness, amply sufficient for the guidance of our steps, and the warrant of our confidence; the rest is a mere matter of theory, and

a pining after speculative gratification which may without injury be restrained. That we have here a mystery is true; but for us, who are not only confronted by this mystery but surrounded by so many more, this is surely a matter neither to be wondered at, nor complained of.

I may observe, further, that the mystery now under consideration is among the very last which we can expect to disappear. Its solution involves a balancing of the ends proposed by the creating power and administrative wisdom of God, against the physical and moral evil which is evolved in the attainment of them. The question to be answered is, whether, seeing that sentient and rational life have been accompanied by pain, and moral probation has issued in sin and punishment, it would, or would not, have been better, either that no form of life should have been produced, or, at least, that the conditions of life should have been totally changed? It is presumption even to meddle with such a question. What human, what angelic, mind, is capable of entertaining it? Who possesses either the knowledge required for its statement, the wisdom required for its consideration, or the blended tenderness and fortitude required for its decision? It is evidently a question for God, and for God only, and the only answer which can be given to it by us is that which will be dictated by a loving confidence in his character: "We believe it is best as it is, because a holy and benevolent God has thought it so."

It may be added, that this particular mystery holds an important place in our moral probation and discipline. The obscurity which thus rests on the perfect holiness and goodness of God supplies a test to man's heart. It asks whether we can trust him, and it puts us to the proof. As a case in which the evidence is not, like mathematical demonstration, absolute, there is scope given by it for the play of our feelings, and upon these, perhaps, more than upon argument, our conclusion may really depend. With a heart estranged, jealous, and suspicious, the varied aspects of sin and suffering in the universe may be taken up with an eagerness, and dwelt upon with a zest, which will give them disproportionate power, and make them inflame to madness a spirit of enmity; while a spirit of filial love and reverence will lead to the grateful entertainment of opposite views, and dispose the heart to confidence even where the understanding may fail

to be satisfied. Is it not well that we should be placed in circumstances where such a test may be applied to us, and where the very aspect of God's works may present a method of discrimination between his enemies and his friends?

Respecting this difficulty I observe, in the fourth place, that *light will be thrown upon it hereafter*. Without asserting that all mysteries will be cleared up hereafter, I may safely say that much light will be thrown upon this. The ways of God towards man will one day be in a position to be much better understood, and man himself in a position much better to understand them. They are now in progress, they will then be complete; and, as their progress requires concealment, so their completion will require discovery. What is hid now for purposes of trial will be revealed then for purposes of judgment. Having light enough now to direct his own steps, man will have light enough then to read the justice of his Maker; the awfulness of the doom will necessitate a clear exhibition of its righteousness, and the final glory of the Governor require an unveiling of his countenance. It will be then, more particularly, that the compensatory elements of God's ways can be more correctly appreciated, because they will then have come more fully into bearing, and will have produced the results for which they were designed. It will be then that we shall be better able to say whether the benefits of sentient and rational life, of equitable and merciful probation, have been purchased at too great a cost, or whether they are really worth the evil which has been incidental to them. Wait, therefore, wait. This is not to be a mystery for ever. A little while and you shall know all.

Let me, however, dear hearer, ask you a practical question. Are you prepared to know all? In what manner will the discoveries of the coming day affect you? How do you stand affected towards God now? Are you his enemy, or his friend? God is not afraid that you should see him; have you no reason to be afraid of seeing God? Will a view of his glory delight, or terrify you? Will his demonstrated holiness and goodness rejoice, or afflict you? O! if you are consciously his enemy, and if it is in the spirit of an enemy that you entertain accusations against him, depend upon it you will be confounded and put to shame. He will "overcome when he is judged" (Romans iii. 4), and triumph in the day of his

trial. Were it not better that you should acquaint yourself with him, and be at peace? His friendship is offered to you; why should you not be reconciled to him? In Jesus Christ his Son his holiness and benevolence are in glorious and persuasive union; acknowledge and revere them there, where they shall be combined in the forgiveness of all your sins, to your present and eternal happiness.

For us, my brethren, whose peace with God is established by faith in his Son, the ultimate manifestation of God's glory will be unspeakably felicitous, and we can wait for it with cheerfulness. No blot shall be attached to him by that "day of revelation," nor shall we who have confided in him now have reason to be ashamed of him then. We shall undoubtedly see that the issues of the methods to which both physical and moral evil have been incidental, are amply compensative of the evil they have involved, and have left a balance of glory to his name, in the manifestation of which a holy admiring universe shall say, "Thou hast done all things well."

HYMN.

CREATION! 'Twas a glorious hour;
First of thy deeds, Eternal Power!
The universe then called to be,
As now upheld and ruled, by thee.

What countless worlds in splendour shine!
And all the workmanship is thine:
The right, the beautiful, the blest,
Thou lov'st, in living forms expressed.

But shadows o'er creation rise—
So clouds obscure the brightest skies;
And sin and sorrow stretch their wings
Darkly across the loveliest things.

Yet who shall ask the reason why?
Or scan thy work with angry eye?
Thy holy love still guides thy ways,
And still we sing thy awful praise.

LECTURE IX.

GOD IN COUNSEL.

“Great in counsel.”—*Jeremiah xxxii. 19.*

IN our preceding Lecture we contemplated God in action ; and, although our survey was cursory and superficial even to painfulness, we found ourselves in the midst of vast and glorious works, without number and without end. Creation and providence, moral government and redemption, spread out their manifold wonders before us, and awakened our most devout admiration. It is the testimony of Scripture, however, that the Lord of hosts is no less “wonderful in COUNSEL” than “excellent in working;” and we now turn to contemplate this aspect of his glory. In attempting to guide your meditations on this interesting subject, I shall, in the first place, advert to the grounds on which we are led to this general conception of God, and, in the second place, indicate some particulars wherein his greatness in counsel consists.

I. We have, in the first place, to do with A GENERAL CONCEPTION of God, and it will be proper to explain the manner in which we arrive at it.

After our survey of the works of God, we endeavoured to trace them backwards to their originating impulse in the divine mind, and we referred them with satisfaction to the love of the beautiful, physical, conscious, and moral, which essentially constitutes the emotional nature of the Deity. In order to be perfectly satisfied, however, in the contemplation of any voluntary action, it is necessary for us to see, not only the impulse from which it springs, but the object to which it is directed—an end as well as a motive. Action without an object produces a painful impression in two respects: on the one hand, it seems to be itself vain, as without meaning; and, on the other hand, it is prodigal, as a waste of power. The impulse from which an action was done may be intelligible, and even commendable; and yet, if it be done heedlessly or unskilfully, so as to produce no useful or adequate result, our approbation fails, and we become ready to rebuke him for folly whom we were about to commend for goodness.

This sentiment becomes stronger in proportion to the extent and magnitude of the operations to which it relates. The larger the amount of pecuniary resources or of physical power expended on a work, the greater its extent, the more numerous its departments, the more complicated its details, and the more magnificent its whole aspect, the more necessary to our satisfaction it becomes that the arrangements should be skilful, and the object worthy. We expect to see a cottage neat, and to a certain extent commodious ; but we look for splendour in a palace, and a far larger provision for enjoyment.

The sentiment which thus attaches to human actions it is both proper and necessary to attach to the divine. It is from himself that we have derived the aptitude thus to judge, and he is the last being who can be excepted from its exercise. Nor need we be afraid. According to the noble selection of ends and the skilful arrangement of means, he has made us to place voluntary beings in higher and higher ranks ; and it cannot be that according to the rule he himself has laid down he will be found wanting, or that on his own scale of wisdom he will stand at zero.

It is, in truth, in relation to the works of God that the sentiment of which I am speaking acquires its greatest possible strength. In no respect are any works to be compared to his, nor can it in any case be half so important that works should be wisely conducted. Consider their vast magnitude and extent, their multitudinous elements, their extreme complexity, the infinite importance of their issues, and the permitted inroad of a hostile power ; and say whether, in such a scheme, anything can, without a sensation of pain approaching to horror, be regarded as merely permitted to happen, or as taking place without intelligent direction and skilful combination. The demand for wisdom in such a system is at once enormous and imperative. The want of it could not fail to reduce the myriads of worlds, now orderly, to a universal chaos, assuredly not less than dishonourable to its Author. Without wisdom, God ought also to have been without power. He that is "great in might" should also be "great in counsel."

The aspect of the universe as it is presented to us demonstrates, indeed, that God is wise as well as powerful. The "excellent in working" which we discover on every hand, is

an embodiment of the "wonderful in counsel" which is not manifest to us. Looking at skies and stars, at earth and seas, at seasons and times, and at creatures of countless forms, we say with unwavering certainty these are no chance works; they have not happened, they have been designed.

We have before us, then, on proper and necessary grounds, the general conception of God in counsel. Now, to our apprehension, counsel implies deliberation; and, with due qualification, and especially an exclusion from it of all doubt, difficulty, or hesitation, this word must be taken as applicable to the divine Being. Under an impulse to create a universe, he has the plan of a universe to form. If his understanding be infinite, there are, of course, an infinite number of modes in which this general purpose may be fulfilled; and out of them, all manifest to the eternal mind, that which shall best approve itself to him is to be selected. The outline being determined, the filling up follows; adaptations, arrangements, and combinations innumerable, in order to secure and carry out, in the best way, the general design proposed. In the counsel thus taken it is natural to suppose the Godhead acts, not in its unity alone, but in its complexity; and we conceive, accordingly, that the divine Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are parties (so to speak) to this conference of creative wisdom.

II. What, then, we ask in the second place, are **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD IN COUNSEL?** And wherein does his greatness in counsel manifest itself?

As to the actual result of divine consultation, that, in part at least, is manifest. The universe which God selected is the universe which we see around us, and of which we ourselves are a portion. We know that he chose a universe of vast breadth in space; a universe of many worlds bound together by a common tie, yet by such enormous distances separated that each is in a solitude, and fitted to be a theatre of isolated operations; a universe comprehending, in one world at least, an ample display of organic existences, rising through physical to sentient and rational life; and in the last class giving scope to voluntary action, and affording a basis for moral government. This he chose, for this exists; and he chose it in view of the sorrow and the sin which would be incidental to it, and of the fearful inroad which malignant hostility would make upon it, as on the whole

most to his glory, most richly illustrative of that love of beauty which constitutes his emotional nature. What, if we may ask such a question, were the characteristics of the counsels by which such a choice was arrived at?

First, *the counsels of God are eternal*. Thus the apostle speaks of "his eternal purpose" of redemption (Ephesians iii. 11), and there can be no doubt of the correct application of the epithet to all his purposes. The fact springs, indeed, out of the eternity of the divine nature; for, if there be with him no succession of time, no time can be conceived to which his purpose might be assigned. Created existence, however, is a thing of time, its commencement being noted, and its duration being measured, by its ceaseless changes. The counsels of God are thus thrown back to an immeasurable date beyond the actual creation of the universe, into a deep and unfathomable eternity. They were thus ancient thoughts before they were embodied in facts; a venerable antiquity belonged to the design of the young creation. New deeds did not indicate new counsels.

And, as the counsels of God at large are thus thrown back far beyond the origin of things, so every portion of them assumes this position. There is no part of God's purpose of which it can be said, "This is an after-thought, an element added to the original plan." Nothing has been devised during the progress of events, either to repair defect or to secure new advantages, either to correct error or to avert mischief. All is from everlasting. And there is no reason why it should be otherwise. Man, indeed, makes discoveries; in the wear and tear of his machinery he finds perpetual work to do, and in the course of attaining one object he finds himself unexpectedly within reach of another. But not so with God. With the absolute foreknowledge which belongs to him, it were nothing short of a voluntary neglect not to make his design from the beginning all that he would ever wish it to be.

Secondly, *the counsels of God are perfect*. They comprehend the whole of his intended work; nothing is left to accident, or to probability. Nothing is too minute to be included in his plan. It has, indeed, been imagined by some persons that only the great outlines of the universe and its history have been determined by God, and that the lesser parts have been left to be filled up by accidental or by

voluntary, action. Were there no other reason, however, why such an imagination should be repudiated, this would be sufficient, that under such a system no security could be taken for the ultimate results. As a sum of money is only an aggregate of the smallest coins, as the ocean is but an accumulation of single drops, and time itself but a succession of moments, so the largest events are but an aggregation and succession of little things. Throughout all nature, throughout all morals, and doubtless throughout all the works of God, every change is represented by some sequence of which it has been the producing cause, and the regulation of the cause is clearly necessary to the determination of the effect. It is not because the effect is great that we are warranted to believe the cause to be great also. Within our own observation very small causes often produce most gigantic effects. A single spark propels a cannon shot, or explodes a magazine; but how can he who does not control the spark direct the shot, or guard against the explosion? Still more strikingly is this the case in the world of mind, most extensive and important results often manifestly ensuing from single, and even from slender, emotions. It is thus obvious that, to detach from God's direct management what may be called the trifles of the universe, is to withdraw from him no less the control of its great affairs. If his counsels were not to comprehend the former, they could never secure the latter.

There is, however, in reality, no ground on which the distinction supposed in these remarks can rest. Great and small are terms of relation and comparison, merely denoting, not what things are in themselves, but what they are either to us or to one another; they have no applicability to God, to whom nothing is great or small, all magnitudes being either merged in a common littleness by comparison with his infinity, or raised to a common greatness by the fact of his relation to them. All that is within his administration is important to him; and he does not deem it unworthy of himself to watch the fall of a sparrow, or to number the hairs of our head (Luke xii. 7). We adopt, therefore, in the most ample sense, the words of the Psalmist—"As for God, his way is perfect" (Psalm xviii. 30); and the eternal counsels of which it is the execution comprehend the intelligent and definite determination of even the minutest occurrences.

Thirdly, *the counsels of God are sovereign*. And they are

necessarily so, inasmuch as in the selection of his objects, and the arrangement of his plans, he has only himself to please. When that which he thinks best is determined, there is none to ask a question, or to suggest a modification. Were God to hesitate at the assumption of such a sovereignty, or to wait for an adviser, he never could arrive at any purpose at all.

It is quite true, however, that, in the course of such plans as it may seem good to God to adopt, there may arise elements by which it is fitting that the exercise of his sovereignty should be modified. There are two forms of this possible occurrence.

On the one hand, if it should please God to form creatures with a capacity of voluntary action, adapted to become primary or original sources of movement, it will, of course, be proper that his counsels, though sovereign, should respect the independence which he thus confers. What he himself will do he may determine, and this by his sole pleasure, but it is not for him to determine what *they* shall do. This would be to pursue a course self-contradictory and absurd, and to undo with one hand what he had done with the other—first to loose, and then to bind with fetters. Having made beings to act of themselves, of themselves he must permit them to act, waiting (so to speak) to see what they do in order to frame his conduct according to theirs, or rather foreseeing what they will do, and in this foreknowledge forming his eternal purpose. In relation to this subject, I cannot but deem it an infelicity that, in some ecclesiastical formulas of doctrine, it is affirmed that God has from eternity ordained "*whatsoever* comes to pass." This is surely too sweeping a phrase, and cannot, by any qualifications attached to it, be divested of an inadmissible implication. As to the language of the apostle, who tells us that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," it is obviously limited by its connexion to the great scheme of mercy of which he is speaking. The sovereignty of God is here liable to one natural and necessary limitation; it must be confined to his own acts.

On the other hand, should it please God to institute a method of government by motive, and to allot to the conduct of those creatures whom he may subject to it a series of equitable recompenses—of rewards and punishments—it will

be equally proper that his sovereign pleasure should not interfere with this part of his administration. This is obviously set off from his natural dominion as the demesne of justice, and is thenceforth under the rule of absolute equity. As a system of human law requires to be carried out with inflexible judicial integrity, neither punishing the innocent, nor sheltering the guilty, through favour or disfavour, so the system of divine law strictly forbids the intrusion of personal feeling. Justice is the proper animating principle of all such systems, and it is a maxim of the last importance to their administration that justice must not be tampered with. It was open to the eternal Sovereign to choose whether or not he would establish such a system, but, having established it, a due regard to its inflexible equity is but an act of reverence to his own appointment. In this respect the sovereignty of God is liable to a second natural and incumbent limitation; it must not intrude on the department of justice.

To this representation it requires to be added, however, that the proceedings of justice may in a sovereign manner be modified, provided the modified administration be equally just, the unharmed preservation of justice being the only point to be secured. Were this not the case, for a transgressor of the divine law nothing would remain but the strict execution of his doom, and "a fearful looking for of vengeance;" but in this method hope springs up for him. If sovereign mercy and infinite wisdom can devise a way of *righteous* justification for the guilty, so that God may be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, this involves no dishonour; it merely introduces into the department a new element without altering its character, and it may be allowed. Thus is a system of equitable administration capable of being prevented from pursuing its course to the universal ruin of the guilty.

I have stated these things hypothetically for the purpose of better illustration, but we all know that the suppositions represent facts. God has created voluntary agents, and his sovereignty does not intrude upon the sphere assigned to them; their deeds are their own. God has instituted a government by motive, and he respects the necessary justice of its proceedings; and, when in the exercise of his sovereign mercy he modifies them, he maintains their justice still.

It is thus only a limited sovereignty which characterizes God's designs ; subject to these limitations, however, which are eminently to his glory, his counsels are absolutely sovereign. Beyond the detached department of voluntary action and moral government his sovereignty reigns supreme.

Fourthly, *the counsels of God are profound*. They must needs be regarded as such, when we consider that his nature and understanding are infinite. Our deliberations are necessarily superficial, since it is little indeed beyond the surface of things that is open to our view ; but all things are open to God, and, with his infinite wisdom employed in the selection of the best ends and the arrangement of the best means, his counsels cannot but exhibit a corresponding profundity. In the language of the prophet, the Lord is no less "wonderful in counsel" than "excellent in working" (Isaiah xxviii. 29) ; and in rapt admiration the Psalmist exclaims, "Thy thoughts are very deep" (Psalm xcii. 5). Let us reverently approach this abyss of wisdom.

The primary object of the divine activity is, as we endeavoured to show in our last Lecture, the gratification of that supreme love of the beautiful by which the divine nature is essentially characterized ; in what way that object should be attained was a question for divine wisdom to answer. A part of this answer, indeed, may be conceived as readily given. It was divinely natural, if I may so speak, to bring into existence what should embody the treasures of eternal thought, and present to God a kind of mirror of himself. The vastness of the material universe, and the multiplicity and diversity of organic, and sentient, and intelligent beings, are thus easily accounted for. But what of the physical pains which sentient life necessarily entails ? What of the liability to sin which rational life as necessarily involves ? What of the risk that immortal beings might be unhappy ? And what, above all, of the foreseen certainty that angels would rebel, and one world at least be entangled in their fall ? Contemplating these things as they are presented to us, and with our present sympathies, we feel that we should have shrunk from the responsibility of being instrumental to so much suffering, and we sometimes—perhaps habitually—wonder that so holy and benevolent a being as God did not do so too. Here, doubtless, was a problem the solution of which required a far deeper wisdom than ours. What prin-

ciples might have conducted towards its solution we can only conjecture, and this, perhaps, scarcely without presumption. So much, however, is manifest, that it did not please God to determine on creating a universe from which either suffering or sin should be excluded; and we may justly infer from this fact that the ends to be answered by the systems to which sin and sorrow are incident were sufficiently excellent to approve themselves to him, even with this drawback. The unpleasing aspect of pain might in part be mitigated, if not removed, by a process of compensation—pain being made subservient to good; and with respect to penal suffering, to which this idea would not apply, a satisfactory result might be found in the manifestation of the divine attributes, which even sin should not really dishonour, while the system under which it would arise should throw the whole blame of its origination and consequences on the creature, not on the Creator. A compensation may thus be conceived as arising to God for the offence done to him; not, indeed, rendering his glory greater than if sin had not been committed, and so making him debtor to it, but not permitting it to be less.

But, supposing these to be the principles by which the solution of the problem should be guided, what a labour still remained in the choice and arrangement of the methods by which they should be carried out! Advert to the incorporation into the divine plan of the activity of voluntary beings; to whose powers a free scope must be given, and yet to every one of whose movements, however small, those of God himself must be adapted. Advert particularly to the incorporation into the divine plan of the activity of hostile beings—beings not only practically disobedient, but actuated by malignant sentiments, and bent on doing their Maker dishonour; every manifestation of whose enmity must be met and guarded against, inwrought into God's design, and overruled to his glory. And more particularly still, advert to the modification of the divine plan required in order to the rescue of transgressors from the consequences of disobedience. To have dealt with rebels in righteous vengeance had been direct and easy; but how, without dishonouring the justice which condemns them, avert the vengeance they had provoked? How baffled every created intelligence must have been by problems like these! How one alone could be competent to the task, and he "the only wise God."

What was the course actually pursued by divine wisdom is partially revealed to us by the progress of events. We now know that with one class of voluntary beings in rebellion he determined to deal in a way of summary retribution, even with the angels who kept not their first estate; while on another he looked with an eye of pity, and devised for them, at infinite cost, a method of salvation and of hope. We now know where he found a lamb for a burnt-offering, by what unparalleled love he was strengthened for the sacrifice, and by what gifts of honour and of joy he compensates the agony. These things are passing wonderful as facts, what must they have been as *designs*! Bright and amazing thoughts, to which none but the eternal mind could have given origin, and into which angels might well have desired to look.

The profundity which thus characterizes the counsels of God in their outline distinguishes them no less in their details. The manner in which the primary experiment on human fidelity was conducted was wonderfully conceived; so also were the glimmerings of Gospel light, which were destined to illuminate the night of the nations with a glowing brightness; so also was the manner of the Saviour's introduction into this world, and of his immolation on the cross. In truth, the conception of the world's progress as a whole was wonderful, and so also was that of each individual life. What a life was Adam's; Eve's; Noah's; Abraham's! What a life is yours, is mine! Not a glance at things which are but reflects beauty on the counsels they develop, and constrains us to say with the Psalmist, "Thy thoughts are very deep."

Fifthly, *the counsels of God are secret*. I am aware that it is in a limited sense that I must use this expression. Secret as they may originally, and must necessarily, have been in his own bosom, they are already partly manifested by their execution. It is true, also, that he has been pleased to make known a portion of his purposes in the predictions and promises of his Holy Word, at once for the encouragement of our faith and the guidance of our hope. It is further true, that the aspect of God's providence often presents indications of coming events, and enables us, in some small measure, to anticipate the future by an interpretation of the present. Nevertheless, as a general truth, God's counsel is secret. It has been formed in secret, and nothing more is

known of it than he has been pleased to reveal. In this respect it differs from all other purposes; for these are formed, within whatever bosom, in a manner perfectly open to his eye. It is God's prerogative alone, his glory, to be able to conceal a thing.

And the counsels of God are also, to a great extent, wrought out in secrecy. If something is told, more is hidden. This is, in part, a matter of necessity. Wrought out in the presence of voluntary, and even of hostile, beings, if his plans were laid bare they might be frustrated. It is in order to their secure completion that men endeavour to conceal their designs from one another, lest they should be outrun by competitors, or thwarted by opponents. God has to do many things with us from which we should recoil, and which, consequently, it is necessary he should conceal from us. He means to do among the nations many things to the effectuation of which, if they were foreseen, there would be offered a strenuous resistance. He withdraws his immediate purpose from view, therefore, that he may not expose himself to opposition; that he may work so that no man shall let it; and that he may accomplish his designs, as often he must, by reluctant or hostile instrumentality. So he dealt with the monarchs of Egypt, when he would first nourish and then emancipate the posterity of Abraham his friend; and so he dealt with Israel his people, when by their hands he fulfilled his mysterious will on his beloved Son.

This system of secrecy is useful as well as necessary. It is an element in our condition of moral probation. Even God's acts of kindness are often mysteriously performed; and we find occasion to say with the prophet, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isaiah xlv. 15). In this manner it becomes our province to walk, not by sight, but by faith, and occasions are supplied to us for the exercise of trust. Thus he led Abraham into Canaan, and Jacob into Egypt; and, after ages of delay, and through many apparent impossibilities, he fulfilled his promise to both. And thus in mystery he leads his chosen still. So he at once tries his people's patience, and glorifies his own mercy. His deeds of kindness become more conspicuously his own, while those for whom they are wrought are placed in the fittest attitude for the reception of them. He leads us as the blind are led, and by a way which we know not;

but he stretches out his hand to guide us, and bids us not be afraid.

Two limitations which attach to the secrecy of the divine counsels may be contemplated with pleasure; one of them relating to the future world, the other to the present.

The secrecy which attaches to the counsels of God is temporary and transient. In this respect we may make use of our Lord's words, "There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested, neither was anything kept secret but that it should come abroad" (Mark iv. 22). Ultimately the counsels of God are intended for publicity. They have been formed in secret, and carried out in mystery; but they are to be fully disclosed. It is thus that he is to be glorified by them. On the consummation of his work they shall be unveiled as the plan according to which all has been executed, while the work itself shall demonstrate the fidelity with which they have been performed. Were anything to be concealed, a suspicion might attach to it of being unworthy of God, or unfit for exhibition; but, when all shall be disclosed, it shall be seen whether all is not good and worthy of admiration. What a day of discovery that will be for God! A day of trial, when an assembled universe shall, as it were, sit in judgment upon him, and pronounce a verdict on his ways. But the day of trial will be a day of glory too, for the discovery shall redound to his highest praise. Friend and foe alike shall honour him, by either spontaneous or extorted approbation. The acclamation of that day shall be—"Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of saints" (Revelation xv. 3). "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans xi. 33, 36).

A second limitation which attaches to the secrecy of God's counsels relates to the present world. Light always rests on his preceptive will. There is no mystery resting on the path of duty. That path may lead through clouds, but is not obscured by them. When we ask, "Lord, what art thou doing?" the response given to us may be, "Clouds and darkness are round about him" (Psalm xcvi. 2); but a different answer is always ready when we say, "Lord, what wilt thou

have us to do?" Were it not so our path would be difficult indeed; it would be not only inscrutable, but impracticable. Thanks to the mercy which sheds on it always a guiding light! How plain and applicable are the directions of the sacred Word! How just its warnings! How encouraging its promises! How illustrative is providence, with its significant aspects, and its instructive lessons! How available is prayer, the acceptance of which is so sure, and the answers to which come so kindly from above! And if at times, and for a season, perplexity attend us, and our steps are doubtfully taken, still is he who dwells in the thick darkness our guide; and the lesson for our practice is thus announced to us—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm xxxvii. 7).

Fidelity to present light will prepare us for the dissipation of present mystery. It is those who walk according to God's precepts who shall see with rejoicing the manifestation of his purpose. It is in conformity with the plan that the precepts are framed, and they lead with certainty to its most felicitous issues. His way as marked out for us corresponds with his way as chosen for himself, and it is assuredly the way to his eternal presence. For "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose" (Romans viii. 28).

1. Such, beloved brethren, is God in counsel. He deliberates, and employs his infinite understanding and holy wisdom in the selection of ends most worthy of himself, and of means best adapted to the ends. It is a glorious view of him. What a grasp of intellect must be his! What magnificent subjects he must have entertained! What deep questions he must have decided! What endless complications he must have arranged! What minute adaptations he must have perfected! Well does the prophet say he is "great in counsel." In this assuredly he stands alone. And how nobly does this aspect of his character correspond with those which we have already contemplated! The necessary and infinite Spirit, eternal, almighty, all-sufficient, omnipresent, supreme, and animated by an essential love of the beautiful—he deliberates—he takes counsel—that he may waste nothing of his infinite energy, and that he may do nothing that is not worthy of himself. Let him possess almighty power who is so fitted to determine its employment! Give

him materials for unnumbered worlds who is capable of arranging them into so magnificent a universe!

2. And of these eternal and perfect counsels the universe which we behold is the development. What a glorious scene! How interesting should every portion of it be to us! What excellence surrounds us everywhere! The thoughts of God made visible! Not an object, however minute, but represents to us some portion of his eternal counsels! Here is no chance, no accident, but God in all.

3. Of what infinite importance in this view is the moral character of God! Oh! if it were not certain that he is good and holy, if there were any possibility that he might entertain hurtful or foolish designs, with what sorrow and dread we might view him retiring (as it were) into his council chamber, and without a counsellor, to determine the plan and details of a universe by his sovereign will! But sovereignty is not terrible in the hands of holy love. It is but the sovereignty of the kindest, holiest, best of beings, and it is the felicity, not the grievance, of the universe. Were it possible for any power to divest him of it, and to place him in chains, the universe might well cry—"Loose him, and let him go." Yet some people have a terror of divine sovereignty, and can scarcely hear it named without shuddering. Alas! what must they think of their Maker?

4. What an unspeakable felicity must it be to enjoy the friendship of God! And of what vast importance must such a privilege be! Firm as a rock are all his purposes. His declaration is, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah xli. 10). How vain is opposition to him! How inevitable the rebel's doom! How blest his friendship! How secure his promise! Dear hearer, I repeat to you the admonition, "Acquaint thyself with God, and *be at peace*." There is no peace to the wicked, for God is against them, and they cannot prosper; but be at peace with him, and this shall bring peace to yourselves. Approach to him through his Son, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, that the working out of his purposes may bring sure felicity to you.

And why should you who love him not rejoice in his guidance? He leads in mysterious ways. Doubtless; so he has always done, and will always do. But this becomes him, and it behoves you to submit to it. He has given you ground for trusting him, and he hides himself to see whether you can do so.

And can you not trust him? Do you really think he means you mischief, or that he will fail of working out his purposes of good? I am sure you do not. In your inmost heart you entertain worthier thoughts of him. And soon the coming day shall more than confirm your largest expectations. Come, confide in him. And while he graciously says, "I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm xxxii. 8); let your grateful lips respond, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory" (Psalm lxxiii. 24).

HYMN.

Nor without counsel, mighty God,
Thy hands have flung the worlds abroad;
A volume of most bright designs
Thy pen hath writ in fairest lines.

In sovereignty thy plan was laid,
Ere the first sun or star was made,
And by best means, for noblest ends,
Unchanged, to its fulfilment tends.

Firm thy eternal counsels stand:
Who can resist the Almighty hand?
But wrapped in clouds and mystery
Thy thoughts of love and wisdom be.

Ah! when the clouds shall pass away,
And deeds thy deepest thoughts display,
That song of praise, what lips shall sing?
What tongue an equal tribute bring?

LECTURE X.

GOD IN CONSUMMATION.

"The mystery of God should be finished."—*Revelation* x. 7.

THE epithet which the apostle so aptly applies to the series of dispensations which it was his prerogative to sketch in dim prophetic shadows, may with scarcely less fitness be applied also to the entire course of the divine administration. It is emphatically "the mystery of God:" a development of

his thoughts, indeed, but only a partial development of them; such a development of them as awakens at once a sense of beauty and confusion, a feeling of admiration and perplexity. The divine administration, however, is not a scene of absolute and hopeless confusion. It is a development which has in it both germs of order and signs of progress; it is a course of events which has a design, and is tending to its issue. If it is a mystery, it is a mystery which "hath an end," and "shall be finished."

But who shall speak of that consummation? Who can tell the limits of the administration involved in it? The human race is assuredly not the only intelligent occupant of the universe, since it indubitably links itself with at least one other family, namely, the angelic; but the question may fairly be asked, Amidst so many worlds are there no intelligent beings besides? And, if there are, will they have a combined development and a common issue? These questions point to large speculations, not without interest, indeed, but incapable of a positive solution; and whither can conjecture lead us? From one point of view, however, a gleam of reasonable probability may be derived. There is no ground to suppose that the consummation of human destiny will be accompanied by the destruction of the globe on which we dwell. The Scriptures, on the contrary, expressly inform us that "the heavens and the earth which are now are reserved unto fire" (2 Peter iii. 7). Fire, however, is a cause of change rather than of destruction, and is often a cause of purifying and renovating change. After the last conflagration, therefore, and the final abandonment of this world by mankind, the globe itself, as fire may modify it, must be conceived to remain. For what end? An everlasting heap of ashes? A perpetual chaos, whirling in the useless sunbeams? This is scarcely probable; and assuredly there is nothing in its present condition to warrant such an anticipation. May we not rather regard it as a theatre for succeeding, as it may have been a theatre for antecedent, dispensations of the Creator's wisdom? What secret links may connect such successive dispensations, or even bind together the distant and solitary worlds, we are not to know; but yet, perhaps, the administration, however varied, of the One God may be found to have in it a unity characteristic of himself.

To restrain our thoughts, however, from so wide and

speculative a scope, let us now endeavour to contemplate as distinctly as we may the consummation of God's ways in relation to mankind; this is the most practically important part of the subject to us, and in relation to it we have to a certain extent a guide in his written Word. May light be given us to interpret it aright!

The aspect of God's ways towards man is complex. It presents to us, in the first place, a system of moral government made the basis of an artificial experiment of a benign tendency—I refer, of course, to the dispensation instituted in Eden—but interfered with, and frustrated as to its felicitous issue, by a malign and artful enemy. It presents to us, in the second place, a state of universal equitable probation under the precepts and sanctions of the moral law; this also being made productive through sin, and under the influence of the same adversary, of universal condemnation. And it presents to us, in the third place, a glorious intervention of redeeming mercy, extending conditionally to all, and to a portion of mankind made effectual to salvation.

The first of these three aspects of the divine administration towards man it should seem will not re-appear. It had its consummation in the paradise in which it was instituted, and in the sentences which so quickly followed the transgression. Provision being made, indeed, by the supervening system of mercy, for the continued existence of the race, some of the consequences of the first sin were incorporated with it as congruous with its probationary character, such as the necessity of labour and the liability to death; but these will obviously cease with the probationary state to which they attach. The corruption of man's nature, also dating from the fall, does not come into judgment, since it is without demerit of its own. According to the Scripture, no man will be condemned hereafter either for the corruption of his nature or for Adam's sin, for God "will render to every man *according to his works*" (Romans ii. 6).

Of the remaining aspects of God's administration I must speak in different terms. Of his moral government and his redeeming system the consummation has yet to be effected, and to this I must now direct your attention.

Whatever may occur to individuals of human kind at death, the winding up of this combined administration waits for the end of the world, in order that it may exhibit the

destiny of all who have been comprehended in it; and then, when the last man shall have accomplished his deeds, comes the day of doom. For God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts xvii. 31). And "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10). I shall not attempt to enter into any description of the transactions of that solemn day, which will no doubt be one of grandeur befitting the Being in whose dispensation it holds a place; it is more to my present purpose to remark the issues to which it immediately leads. They are thus announced by the Judge himself: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew xxv. 31-34, 41, 46).

Such, then, upon unquestionable authority, are the issues of God's administration towards mankind; the things which are to remain when the theatre in which the human passions and human character have been developed shall have been burnt up, and all its turmoil hushed in the silence of a common and everlasting grave. Heaven and hell—a realm of misery and a realm of joy—these are the residue of God's ways, the consummation of his administration.

These realms, however opposite, will have some features in common. There will be in both, it must be assumed, a development of the human nature into the fulness of its physical powers. "Flesh and blood" will not be appropriate to either, since the world with which they constituted the necessary medium of communication will no longer exist. As both the just and the unjust will rise again, so will the bodies of both possess a congruity with the spiritual world to

which the resurrection will introduce them, however different in it their respective conditions may be. Whatever directness of knowledge, whatever vividness of perception, whatever intensity of feeling, whatever ardour of passion, may characterize the one, will no less characterize the other.

In another respect these opposite realms will be alike. They will be final. Neither the happiness of the one nor the suffering of the other will be susceptible of further change. The blest will remain so, without further temptation, or hazard; the wretched will remain so, without further probation, or hope. Eternity sets its seal upon them for evermore.

Thus similar in some respects, the realms we are thinking of are totally dissimilar in others. They are heaven and hell. I have already called the one a realm of joy, and the other a realm of sorrow. How shall I amplify these simple expressions, or give intensity to the ideas they are intended to convey? "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived" the grand realities. Heaven and hell! Think of these as the Scripture guides you. These are the end of all things.

I am aware that in thus sketching in a few sentences this ultimate result, as I regard it, of the divine administration, I am enunciating sentiments which all do not hold, and which some strenuously resist; but the scope of my discourse will not allow me to go into argument, and I must therefore content myself with stating the matter as the Scripture appears to me to put it. The question I now proceed to ask is, assuming the consummation of all things to be as I have represented it, whether God is thereby glorified.

I. In attempting to answer this question, I will take up, in the first place, the more painful of the two elements, and the more difficult of treatment. I speak of the realm of misery, and I am far from speaking of it lightly.

1. The first difficulty in the way of conceiving such an issue to be to the glory of God arises from human sympathy. Impossible as it is to a well-constituted mind to contemplate suffering of any kind without pain, it is beyond all things affecting to contemplate, though only in imagination, a portion of our race in endless suffering, and this of the severest kind. Our sympathies recoil from such a scene as a mere exhibition of pain, and still more as one of pain inflicted by a God infinitely kind and merciful.

It may be observed, however, that the question which now comes before us is not one of which our sympathies are fitted to be the judge. Future punishment is not the only question of this kind; similar questions arise in the present life. Sympathy alone would interfere with the use of animal food, still more would it supersede many modes of punishment, and it would in all cases stay the hand of the executioner. Amiable and useful as it is, it is requisite sometimes to put it out of court (to use a technical expression), in order that sterner, but not less honourable, principles may have due operation. And, if sympathy requires to be put under restraint for some necessary purposes of human life, how much more may a similar restraint be thought necessary in relation to divine proceedings! God, indeed, is infinitely more tender than we are; but, to complete his character, it must be added that he is also infinitely more superior to his tenderness. That in this respect he is differently constituted from ourselves, is manifest from the things which he does. Which of us could endure to administer his providence? Which of us could scatter disease and death about the world as our Maker scatters them, lacerating so many hearts, and drawing forth such bitter tears? We know that in this dispensation he is not unkind, and we do not charge him with being so; but it is manifest that he is guided by some higher rule than human sympathy. And so, doubtless, he will be found to be in other matters. In truth, in human beings sympathy has a place not absolute, but relative; and it appears not so much as an essential virtue, as an element adapted to man's condition. Here we want it, though even here we have to guard against its excess; but in another state its force and relation to other sentiments will doubtless be greatly modified. For that modification, of course, we must wait; but we should wait with the understanding that, as our present sympathies will not interfere with our judgment then, so they should not be permitted to embarrass our faith now.

2. What, then, apart from the disturbing influence of sympathy, is the case before us?

The case is this. There are creatures whom God has made susceptible of moral government. Such a government he has established over them, at once righteous in its foundation, and equitable in its arrangements. They have violated

his law, and they are suffering the penalty. What we ask is, Is God herein glorified?

The obvious reply to this question is, that God herein appears in the light of a just judge, administering a righteous law, and vindicating its honour by the punishment of transgressors. This is a position of which no judge in this world is ashamed, nor is it easy to see why the Judge of all the earth should be ashamed of it. It is to his glory as the moral Governor, and, under the circumstances, it is the only position of glory he can assume.

If, however, there be those who would represent the attitude in which God thus appears as one dishonourable to him, it is at least fair that the ground of such an imputation should be specified. I can imagine, indeed, various combinations of circumstances in which it would be dishonourable to him. If the infliction of future suffering were a mere exercise of power, arbitrary and without demerit, it would be dishonourable to him; but it is not so. If the infliction of future suffering were a thing malign, and arose from a pleasure taken by God in the pain of others, it would be dishonourable to him; but it is not so. If the infliction of future punishment were an indulgence of personal resentment, and intended to gratify the passion of revenge, it would be dishonourable to him; but it is not so. If, as Governor, God had assumed an unrighteous rule, and claimed obedience where none was due, it would be dishonourable to him; but it is not so. If the law of his government were inequitable in its demands, or excessive in its penalties, it would be dishonourable to him; but it is not so. If his judgment had been uncandid, and fault had been imputed, either without reason, or without fair allowance, it would be dishonourable to him; but this is not so. I am prepared to maintain as facts the reverse of all these suppositions. A punishment more purely judicial, more exactly proportionate in itself, or more truly carrying out the terms of a righteous government, and fulfilling the obligations of a just judge, has never been put on record. If this do the Judge of all the earth dishonour, wherein can any judge do himself honour? Must every judge who has to pronounce a sentence of condemnation come down from the bench with shame?

There are ways, it is true, by which a judge may do him-

self dishonour. A judge may do himself dishonour if he permits justice in his hands to be tampered with; if he allows his feelings to make him swerve from his duty; if he accepts a bribe to the blinding of his eyes, or suffers the guilty to escape by perverting judgment. Is it in this method that those who are so zealous for the honour of God would wish him to be glorified?

3. But God, it may be alleged, is infinitely benevolent, and the infliction of so much suffering cannot be consistent with this fact. In order to answer this allegation, I may be permitted to restate a general principle which in a former discourse I have laid down. In considering the emotional nature of God, I showed it to consist of holiness, complacency, and benevolence, or the love of the right, the beautiful, and the happy; and I added that these affections stand in such an order that, in any possible collision, the happy will be subordinated to the right, or benevolence to holiness. Now here is a case for the application of this principle. In the moral government of God justice is the presiding attribute, harmonizing with benevolence, indeed, in the general scope of the system, but not liable to be controlled by it in its administration; in other words, the government is designed for the happiness of mankind, both as a whole and individually, but it provides for this happiness in a way of righteousness only, which consequently must be maintained whether the happiness contemplated be secured or not. This principle is embodied in earthly governments. Their aim is, no doubt, the welfare of the community, collectively and individually; but the highest possible praise is given to them, if it can be said that they will promote the welfare of all well-conducted subjects; nothing beyond this is ever anticipated from them. No one imagines that a government is intended to advance the prosperity of the thief and the highwayman; on the contrary, the punishment of these is at once its proper duty, and its genuine praise. No reproach attaches to it even for taking the life of him who has taken the life of another; an act not in itself benevolent, certainly, but justified and made honourable by considerations which, under the circumstances, over-ride even benevolence.

I may, indeed, go further than this, and say that benevolence, properly estimated, not only acquiesces in the punishment of offenders, but requires it. For it is not only to the

criminal that benevolence is due; it is due to the community also, whose welfare he has invaded, and it is due to the community by a much stronger title than to the individual. Not to punish robbers and murderers, however kind it may be to them, is assuredly not kind to the public at large, but the reverse, since it deprives them of their natural defence against plunder and bloodshed. The question lies, therefore, between benevolence on a small scale and benevolence on a large one—or, rather, between benevolence in violation of righteousness and benevolence in accordance with it; and the answer cannot be doubtful.

The principles thus incorporated into human governments are of safe and easy application to the divine. The government of God tends to the happiness of all, and it provides for the happiness of all who are obedient. It cannot honourably do more. To procure happiness to the disobedient, would be to inflict upon itself a deep and insufferable disgrace, and upon the human race at large a lasting and irreparable injury. Neither of these can divine benevolence require. The unsullied maintenance of God's righteous government is, on the whole, even more kind than suffering sinners to go unpunished; and, if an occasion for the punishment of sinners arises, it is a measure, however painful, in which benevolence itself can without dishonour acquiesce.

4. The benevolence of God being thus shielded, we are now at liberty to attend to the attitude assumed by his justice. This, assuredly, is awful; but it is also satisfactory. Let me restate the fact. Here is a realm of sorrow, where those of the human race are who were disobedient to the will of God, and where they suffer a punishment proportionate to their culpability.

This, in the first place, is *the natural result and issue* of God's government. It is precisely that for which he framed it, and which from the first he said it would produce. It is not a thing, consequently, which should take any one by surprise, or give occasion to any complaint. If there be really anything to complain of in the punishment, it must be because there is something blamable in the law of which it is the practical expression, and to that antecedent question the investigation should be carried. It is scarcely less than absurd, first to admit that "the law is holy, and just, and good," and then to complain of the punitive part of its

administration. Did we then really think that the Judge of all the earth would hesitate in taking vengeance?

This, in the second place, is *a fitting and ample vindication* of God's government. Every system of government by law is liable in the first instance to dishonour, since the law may be broken, and so authority be trampled underfoot. It is, of course, necessary that there should be some way in which the honour of the law may be vindicated, and the government, else enfeebled, maintain its title to respect. The punishment of transgression constitutes this method, and it is universally held to be as satisfactory as it is necessary. Either by obedience or by penalty, the law has its due. Such is the manner in which the government of God is vindicated in the realm of sorrow we are contemplating. These sufferers are rebels, and what they suffer is the just reward of their deeds. By their rebellion they trampled the authority of God under their feet, and now the honour of that authority is vindicated by the vengeance taken on their crimes. And how amply is it vindicated! Here is punished every sinner, not one has been permitted to escape. Here is punished every sin, not one has been overlooked or forgotten. Here is fulfilled every threatening, not a word that the Great Ruler has spoken has fallen to the ground. Yes, guilty men! For a time you triumphed, and in the space which his long-suffering gave you you grew wanton in iniquity, as though you had been gods, and not men; but an almighty hand has at length arrested you, and you are now paying the just penalty of your crimes. Believe it for evermore! And hear it, assembled worlds! The Lord taketh vengeance, and iniquity shall not go unpunished. Eternal justice, faithfulness, and truth, have erected to themselves an imperishable monument here.

I trust I have treated this part of my subject with due seriousness and caution. My own judgment does not falter in the view which I have taken of it. I believe that the realm of sorrow, with all its terrors, will afford a spectacle not inconsistent with the benevolence of God, and sublimely glorious to his justice and his truth; a spectacle in the contemplation of which a holy universe may say, So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord!

II. I turn, however, with unspeakable delight, from a scene so awful to the brighter and more joyous one which

awaits our notice. If one of the twofold issues of God's administration exhibits itself in a realm of sorrow, the other appears in a realm of bliss. If there be a hell, there is also, blessed be God! a heaven.

But what is heaven? Again we ask the question as fruitlessly as before. Eye hath not seen it; ear hath not heard it; the heart of man hath not conceived it. Set it before yourselves in imagination, however, as best you may. See the ransomed multitudes before the throne of God. "In his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm xvi. 11). They are come to the celestial Zion "with songs, and everlasting joy; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah xxxv. 10). And whence came they? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation vii. 14-17).

This is heaven; and this realm of bliss, with its perpetual and exquisite joys, remains as the issue and everlasting memorial of the work of redeeming mercy. If divine justice be honoured, verily grace hath its triumphs too.

1. *Grace has triumphed over extraordinary difficulties of position.* These ransomed ones are brought from a state of corruption which might have seemed for ever to separate them from a holy God, and from a state of condemnation which might have seemed to shut them up in everlasting despair. Infinitely pure was the bosom into which they have been brought, and infinitely righteous the sentence which has been cancelled in their favour; "and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James ii. 13). But how is this? Have holiness and justice, then, been disregarded in their claims, and tarnished in their glory? They have not. Eternal wisdom hath made search in the secret places, and hath returned with the tidings, "I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii. 24). "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). One chosen out of the people has been authorized to interpose, and to become a Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. By him every claim is fulfilled, and the honour of every attribute secured. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" and all that everlasting love desired is effected to the satisfaction of all.

2. *Grace has triumphed over unparalleled force of opposition.* For the ruin of man was the work of an enemy, not only to man himself, but to his Maker. It was wrought, with combined malice and fraud, by a spirit outcast from heaven, and permitted to fill up his iniquities upon earth; a spirit whom the Scriptures designate "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians iv. 4), "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2). Having succeeded in leading mankind captive at his will, the great adversary had at length to encounter man's Deliverer, even the Son of God, who "was manifested to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). And by him the adversary has been defeated. See how gloriously! These ransomed spirits were once his slaves, held in bonds of corruption and of shame; but the Spirit of the Lord hath broken their bonds, and introduced them into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Captain of salvation has brought these many sons unto glory, in defiance of the sagacious hostility employed to prevent their progress. In vain has the enemy watched and toiled; in vain has he spread his wiles, or thrown in his fiery darts; in vain has he endeavoured to exhaust their patience, or to assail their faith. More was he that was for them than all those that were against them. In their weakness they were made strong, and at last they were made more than conquerors, through him that loved them. They have entered heaven as unquestionable victors. They have palms in their hands, and crowns on their heads; and they exclaim, "Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Revelation vii. 10). In this view, also, grace hath "triumphed gloriously," and the enemy has been taken in his own snare. These conquerors were the feeblest of creatures, the veriest of slaves; yet what noble deeds they have been enabled to accomplish! In their persons the grace of God achieves a sublime victory, and the common adversary suffers a more ignominious defeat.

3. *Grace has triumphed in effecting new developments of divine glory.* New circumstances were, of course, adapted to new developments, and it was to be seen to what measures the divine Being would have recourse on the entrance of sin into the world. It might have been thought that, under such a condition, some aspect of the character of God might have suffered obscurity; but, marvellous to say, every one of them in its turn acquires new glory. Mercy and justice, holiness and truth, have found a scope here which could not otherwise have been given to them, and magnificently have they acquitted themselves. Mercy has not merely recovered man from his lost estate, but has raised him to a dignity and blessedness far surpassing the original scope of his being; holiness and justice have given an expression to the purity of the divine nature, and the excellency of his law, unspeakably more convincing than could else have been attained; wisdom has entered into counsels more profound and unfathomable than any other position of affairs could have originated, and has come forth with arrangements of unparalleled excellency and beauty; while faithfulness has had to affix its seal to "exceeding great and precious promises," which, but for the conveyance of such benefits, had never proceeded from the lips of the Eternal.

We have thus contemplated separately the issues of the divine administration; let us now combine the views which we have taken. God has made this world a theatre for the display of his justice as a moral Governor, and of his grace as a Redeemer; it is consequently fit that, in the issue, both his justice and his grace should be magnified. As we have seen, his justice and his grace are magnified; and, this being the case, he is content to let the heavens and the earth pass away, and the issues he has arrived at remain as the monuments of his finished administration.

On the view thus presented one cloud still seems to rest, and to cast a shadow over its solemn beauty. A part at least—it may be said a great part—of this glory the Author of all things seems to derive from the introduction of sin. Is this to his glory?

This question is not merely a speculative one, it is of great importance as affecting our estimate of the divine character. It is practically this: Does God owe anything to his enemy? And has he to thank the spoiler of his works for an opportunity of higher exaltation?

Some persons have gone, with a warmth of feeling much to be envied, to the immediate conclusion that God has derived a greater glory by the introduction of sin than would have been otherwise possible; but I question the soundness of their judgment, and the justice of their conclusion. It leads to an inference quite inadmissible. If this be so, it will follow that God has no real reason for being angry, either with sin or with sinners, either with devils or with men. For God's object is his own glory. Why, then, should he be angry with those who have lent themselves to his object, and whose conduct, however it may be called wrong, was necessary to its attainment? It is evident that he should rather approve than blame. He might have more reason for complaint, indeed, if, by a better course of action, they had deprived him of opportunities which he has turned to such remarkable account.

For my own part, I cannot face this inference. I cannot make the God of heaven a debtor to the god of this world. I do not believe that he is so, and I am constrained, therefore, to seek some other mode of viewing the facts.

The case before us is this. By his successful stratagem in Eden, and the seduction of our first parents into sin, the great enemy prevented a felicitous issue of the first dispensation, and caused it to result in the suffering of its penalty; he thus effected a great amount of mischief in God's works, and led man to do much dishonour to God himself. With respect to the sin of man, the honour of God would have been sufficiently vindicated by the infliction of the penalty; but with respect to the mischief caused by the tempter, God saw fit to adopt a compensatory system, by providing for a multiplication of the human race under a scheme, not of federal, but of individual probation. Again, however, Satanic malice prevails, and, through unceasing temptation, he leads mankind individually to sin and to perdition. Here, also, as far as mankind are concerned, the honour of God would have been sufficiently vindicated by executing the penalty of the moral law; but a triumph remains to the enemy, who has a second time occasioned great mischief, and rendered two dispensations of divine benignity and wisdom productive of none but deplorable results. Now, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8); and a third dispensation is introduced,

based on the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, and at once presenting a hope of salvation on repentance to all, and by effectual grace securing the salvation of a chosen people. Under this third dispensation, as to the purely probationary part of it, the enemy again triumphs; but grace triumphs in the elect; and the glory resulting to God from their salvation, in the height of blessedness to which it is carried, and in the new developments of his character by which it is effected, is the element by which he obtains compensation to himself for the disastrous inroads which have been made by his adversary. Satan is not to have the proud gratification of saying to God, "Thou hast gotten thyself glory by me;" but he is to retire from the field of conflict on which he has been so wonderfully permitted to contend with his Maker, defeated and chagrined, and only murmuring as he retires, "I have taken nothing by all my toils. As a tempter, indeed, I have been successful beyond all example, but I care not for the rabble whom I have led to destruction; my aim was to dim the glory of the Eternal, which still shines as brightly as if I had never conspired against him."

But one word only I will add to these remarks. While God is pursuing his works to a consummation which will glorify himself, what a felicity it is that he places us in a position in which we may secure our own welfare! His chariot moves on, but its wheels crush no one in their path. In which of those two ultimate realms, dear hearer, you will be, depends not upon God, but upon yourself. Which is your choice? Heaven, or hell? And to which are you tending? Is your face Zionward? Have you been to Jesus? Are you cleansed from sin by his blood? Are you living to his praise? Of what awful moment these questions are your conscience testifies now; may God enable you so to ponder them, that you may be prepared to take a happy position when the consummation of all things arrives!

HYMN.

ERE while completed gloriously
The mystery of God shall be,
His path of hidden wisdom run,
And his last victory be won.

Enthroned when grace and vengeance sit,
With hell and heaven beneath their feet,
Th' acclaim from every tongue shall burst,
"How rich the grace! The wrath how just!"

“ Evil its guilty course hath run,
And deeds of fearful mischief done ;
But thou art just and holy still,
And good hast brought from deadliest ill.

“ No triumph to thy hateful foe,
As from uncompensated woe ;
While to thy praise a ransomed throng
Shall pour an everlasting song.”

LECTURE XI.

GOD NOT PERCEIVED BY THE SENSES.

“ No man hath seen God at any time.”—*John* i. 18.

WE have pursued to an apparent termination our endeavours to enlarge our acquaintance with God. Regarding his existence as an historical fact, and seeking our knowledge of him from the sacred Scriptures, we have been led to contemplate him as a spirit infinite, necessary, and complex; and, as a spirit, as a being intelligent, emotional, voluntary, and active. We have also, under the same guidance, glanced at his wonderful works, both in the counsels in which they originated, and in the consummation to which they are tending. Our subject has been grand, and our meditations deeply interesting; but they ought also to have a practical influence. If God be such in himself, it is fit he should be such *to us*. How shall his glory be practically realized by us?

At this point we are met by a characteristic of his nature which requires our serious regard. He is not perceived by the senses. “ No man hath seen God,” says the evangelist, “ at any time;” nor is he heard, or felt, or handled. So also spake the ancient patriarch.

“ Behold, I go forward, but he is not there ;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him :
On the left hand, where he doth work,
But I cannot behold him ;
He hideth himself on the right hand,
That I cannot see him.”

Job xxiii. 8, 9.

I say nothing here of the thoughtless and superficial manner in which atheistical persons catch at this topic, and exclaim, with a sort of triumph of which they must well know the baselessness, "Show us your God!" It will be time enough to answer so heedless a taunt, when even an atheist is willing to confine his idea of existence to things that are seen, and will believe in nothing but the intimations of the senses. The subject, however, is not without its interest and importance, as presenting at least an apparent difficulty in the way of a practical recognition of God, and as affording some kind of excuse for the too prevalent neglect of him by mankind.

We take up, then, the general fact that God is not perceived by the senses, and inquire into its aspect and bearing. Are we herein subjected to a disadvantage? And would it really be better for us if we could see God?

A plea may certainly be put in for an affirmative answer to this question. It may be said that, endowed as we are with senses, and to a certain extent the creatures of them, a being who could be discovered by the senses might be more easily and more vividly realized. And this plea might be strengthened by an appeal to facts. According to the sacred narrative, we learn that man in his state of innocence was favoured with sensible manifestations of the Deity, and that a similar indulgence was not infrequent during the earlier ages of the world. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and many more enjoyed it. With Moses the Lord conversed as a man with his friend. To the prophets sensible displays of the divine glory were made. And at length God was pleased to crown all these condescensions by one of surpassing grace, in the actual incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. If there had been a deficiency in former discoveries of God, now, at least, there was a fulness. If concerning the more ancient manifestations it might be said, in the words of the Evangelist, that even in these "No man had seen God at any time," in his own words also we may say that "the only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, had declared him" (John i. 18). "In him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily" (Colossians ii. 9), and "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14), shone conspicuously through the veil of his humanity. "He that hath seen me," said Jesus, "hath seen

the Father" (John xiv. 9). If such a method was good for our race in former ages, why should it not be found equally well adapted to them now? And may there not be deemed something just and reasonable in the craving which the human mind has continually shown after a visible deity, both in the developments of pagan idolatry, and in corrupted forms of Christianity?

I. In treating the subject which I have thus opened, I shall, in the first place, DISPOSE OF THE APPEAL TO FACTS.

I observe, first, that *in the infancy of mankind a sensible manifestation of the Deity was called for by a necessity which does not now exist.* With our first parents God was necessarily in direct communication, and scarcely less so with his earliest descendants. They had no other mode of being instructed in his will, or of being guided by his providence. Now direct communication to beings endowed with senses, if it does not require an appeal to them, is at least facilitated by such an appeal, and there is a congruity, therefore, in this arrangement. Were God dealing with us in a way of direct communication, there might be a congruity in it still.

I observe, secondly, that, *as mankind multiplied, the direct communication of God with them individually ceased,* and he spoke to the race, or to its clans, by persons whom he selected for the purpose. Accordingly, the sensible manifestations of himself came to be limited to individuals; they never were extended to the race at large. The system of sensible divine manifestation never was intended for the world, when it was grown old enough to be otherwise treated.

I observe, thirdly, that *the sensible manifestations of God vouchsafed to Abraham and his posterity were partial,* and strictly pertinent to the peculiar method of his providence towards them. He separated them from the nations, and made them the subjects of a theocracy, or immediate divine government, in the conducting of which direct communication was necessary, and with which, consequently, sensible manifestations of himself were congruous. But all this was strictly national, not universal.

I observe, lastly, that *God's manifestation of himself in his Son by an actual incarnation was both local and transient.* It was, undoubtedly, infinitely condescending, and unspeakably valuable; on only one small spot of the globe, however, was that sublime phenomenon visible, and this by no means

the most conspicuous: and even from that isolated spot it soon passed away—not set like a sun for the illumination of the world, but vanishing like a meteor ere the eyes of mankind could be directed to its beauty. Even by this means God never intended to deal with the eye of man; the fact is one of history, not of perception, and as such it appeals, not to the senses, but to the understanding.

The general conclusion, therefore, is that, in throwing mankind now on a purely intellectual knowledge of himself, God does not deal with us in a manner inconsistent with his former dispensations. It is what he always did, subject only to exceptions which peculiar circumstances required. His administration has been rather progressive than changed, and his treatment of the race in its infancy and its maturity, while in accidents different, has been in principle the same.

II. Having thus disposed of the appeal to facts, I advert to the question as one of GENERAL REASONING.

Now it may be remarked, in the first place, that *the anticipation of benefit from sensible manifestations of the Deity does not approve itself to a sound judgment.*

It seems to be assumed by such an anticipation that objects which appeal to the senses are sure of obtaining regard. No assumption, however, can be more false. That such an appeal is more or less effective in the first instance is true, but it soon loses its power, either by familiarity with the object resulting from its constant presence, or from competition with it of other objects which may, or may not, make a similar appeal. Nothing is less impressive on us than sights we are always seeing, or sounds we are always hearing. The senses themselves seem to become weary of such appeals, or, if they are not weary of transmitting the same sensations, the mind grows weary of receiving them. The very function of the senses seems to be confined in its power to transient acts, acts lasting long enough to convey materials for reflection, feeling, and action, but losing their intensity if long protracted. If the mind will avail itself of the intimations of the senses, it will do so quickly; if it will not, it will by its superior power deaden and practically annul them.

The affairs of ordinary life afford ample illustration of this view. In how many aspects, and very moving ones too, the secular welfare of men presents itself to their eyes, and wins no regard! The indolent sees that he is reducing himself to

poverty, but rags and destitution do not make him industrious. The improvident sees himself embarrassed by his thoughtless expenditure, yet he learns no frugality. The intemperate sees the fruits of his folly in his ruined health, in his heart-broken wife, in his squalid lodging, and his beggared children, but he heeds not even these touching demonstrations of his folly.

Or let the question be tried as it respects religion itself. We think we should feel reverence and love before some sensible manifestation of God. What then did they feel who saw God manifest in the flesh? Before their gaze was spread beauty all divine; deeds of unparalleled mercy and power attracted their eyes, and words of excellent wisdom arrested their ears; benignity smiled on all around, and every form of human misery found relief at his hands. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Jesus (John xiv. 9). What did they feel who saw this? A transient curiosity sinking into indifference, or envy growing into hatred. Men could find nothing to do with their manifested divinity, but, after having been disagreeably haunted with it for three years, to calumniate, condemn, and crucify it. Alas! for the power of the senses.

Secondly, while the assumption is thus evidently false that objects appealing to the senses are secure of a due regard, it may be affirmed that *the senses are not capable of conveying to us the ideas by which we are chiefly swayed*. The senses are undoubtedly valuable inlets to knowledge, and necessary media of communication with the outward world, but they are only handmaids to nobler powers. We can think of much greater and more influential things than we can see, hear, or touch. For what, after all, are the real elements which our senses convey to us? We fancy that we learn very much from the eye; philosophers assure us, however, that the eye informs us of nothing but colour, and that even the ideas of form and distance, which we commonly ascribe to the eye, are due to the supplementary influence of touch. The ear conveys to us sounds, another sense odours, and another flavours. But suppose we gather up and group together all the notions with which the senses can furnish us, what do we arrive at? Only the properties of the material world. Goodness, wisdom, truth, power, all that constitutes character or can engage esteem, are conceptions of the mind,

not intimations of the senses. What we love in our friends is not so much what we see, as what is unseen; and this is more emphatically true respecting God. We cannot see God, because what we can see is not God. A god that could be seen would be a god unworthy of our reverence. Accordingly, the conceptions of God which have been formed under the influence of idolatry have always been of the most degraded kind, and, in proportion to the intensity with which men have yielded their worship to "images made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," has been the absence of all worthy ideas of the Deity. The aid of the senses is assuredly not wisely solicited in the service of religion. In no matter is it more important to rise immeasurably above them.

It may be observed, in the third place, that, in being thrown upon a purely intellectual knowledge of God, *our religious and our ordinary life are placed on the same basis.*

It is true that men live in the midst of objects which appeal to their senses, but it is far from being the nature of human life to confine itself to sensible objects. There is a form in which animal life presents itself to us, indeed, in which the senses are a ruling power. In the inferior creatures life consists, either in the working out of the instincts, which are blind, or in the gratification of sensible impulses and momentary desires, without plan and without object; but the life of man is characteristically different from this. Human life has its great energies directed to objects which are more or less remote, and which, consequently, do not appeal to the senses. Even the man who toils for weekly wages for the support of his family, lives for more than he can at any time see, hear, or handle. But it belongs to man, generally speaking, to look forward much farther than this. "The wide, wide world" presents to us many desirable objects, and many avenues of exertion for the acquirement of them; one or the other of these, for the most part, we embrace, and for its attainment we strive—whether the gratification of the social affections, the acquisition of wealth, the attainment of distinction, or the effectuation of benevolent schemes. These—not the eating and drinking which are necessary to support our existence, not the working out of the blind impulses of animal nature—are the objects for which men live, and to which all else is but auxiliary. But

all these things are unseen. Real as they are in themselves, they are to us only things conceived of by the mind, and practically influencing us, not by the eye, but by thought. In substance, they are things which, however strenuously sought, may never be realized at all.

The great spring of energy, then, to human life is ideal. So powerful, indeed, is the tendency of the human mind to idealize the objects of its pursuit, that even material things often lose in our conception the substance which in themselves they have, and become to us altogether ideal. The man of patriotic sentiments, for example, lives for his country; his country being to him no substantial aspect of his country's welfare, but a mere abstraction formed by reflection, and dwelling, in a kind of unearthly beauty, in his imagination. In like manner men devote themselves to politics, to science, or to art; that is to say, to no concrete form of either, but to each as imagined in the mind. Love comes evidently under the same category, and even wealth, grossly material as it is, is not excluded from it. This tendency to idealize the objects of life is a clear demonstration of the inferior position held by our senses, and may be traced to a root deeply planted in our nature. It is competent to us to devise in thought something more lovely and enchanting than the eye ever saw or can see, and thus to create for ourselves an unreal but fascinating beauty, which at once kindles our passions and engages our energy.

Such is man's ordinary life, and such, naturally, should be his religious life also. If it be his characteristic to live for ideal good, the greatest good presented to him should assuredly be in an ideal form; it were a blunder of the grossest kind to present it in the shape of a sensible object. If it be his ideas that man deifies, this is a plain indication that his deity must be an idea. No sensible object can practically be a deity to a being so constituted. In throwing us, therefore, upon a purely intellectual conception of God, our religious life is but placed on the same basis as that on which our ordinary life already reposes.

And in this respect the religious actually resembles the ordinary life of man. For, whatever there may be of the nature of an appeal to the senses in some forms of religion, whether pagan or Christian—as in image-worship, for example, baptized or unbaptized—these have always, more or less

distinctly and vividly, an ideal reference beyond themselves. The carved deities of Egypt and Greece were embodiments by human genius of mythical ideas antecedently entertained, and derived their power over the minds of the worshippers from their association with the ideas which they embodied. This ideal association was still more striking in the Persian worship of the heavenly bodies, and it was not less real with the baser adoration of beasts and reptiles. The same principle still operates under Christian forms; whether exemplified by the pious Lutheran, who sparingly adorns his places of public, and even of private, worship with statues or pictures of holy men for the aid of his meditations; by the superstitious Romanist, who bows confounded amidst a crowd of crucifixes, Madonnas, and saints; or by the serious Anglican, who, repudiating images, still permits his devotion to be assisted by elaborate altar-pieces and painted windows. Of all this the ideal is the soul. Once separate the image from its associations, and neither priests nor people would care for its preservation. It is an ideal deity, therefore, which man's heart craves; to this it is made apt to respond, and with nothing short of this can it be satisfied.

It may be observed, fourthly, that *the practice of life agrees with the principle which we have found to pervade it*. Of the things which are actually done in the world, if the senses are conversant with some, with others they have nothing to do. Some branches of science are purely contemplative, and not only furnish no occupation for the senses, but require for their efficient pursuit a strenuous repudiation of their influence. Mercantile speculation is to a very large extent carried on in a region extra-sensual, and guided by considerations either purely conjectural, or supplied by testimony. Even our tender affections, although largely nourished through the instrumentality of the senses, can exist in great power independently of them, as in the case of parents towards children whom they have never seen, or of distant friends knit together by intellectual intercourse alone. It is obvious, therefore, to ask, why may it not be so with the love and service of God? To the mind and heart his character and excellences make as direct and forcible an appeal as any other objects which appeal to the same powers; and, if their appeal be less practically influential, the reason of this must be sought, not in any want of adaptation in the appeal itself, but in a reluctance to yield to its demands.

In truth, the whole question is one merely of awakened interest. About that which we strongly feel we think often, of whatever kind the object may be, whether it be important or trivial, whether it give us pleasure or pain. This is not only a universal fact, but it is in the nature of the human mind that it should be so. And the reverse is equally true. What we are indifferent to we think of seldom, and forget speedily; and this is the internal link which so closely connects unconcern with obliviousness. And as it is with this world so it is with another, and with God who fills both. If there be any who live forgetfully of him, and find it hard to keep him in their memory, it is because they are far from him in the spirit of their minds, and do not like to retain God in their knowledge; while those who think of him so often, and find it indeed impossible to forget him, are those who love him fervently, and delight in his conscious presence. An unseen God may be forgotten, it is true; so may unseen aspects of the world: but, just as these may be remembered too, so also may God himself be, who makes to us an essentially similar appeal.

It may be said, in concluding this series of observations, that the appeal which God makes to us is not only essentially the same as that which is made by worldly objects, but that it is in degree unspeakably more strong. There is no idea which man's inner powers receive so readily, or grasp so firmly, as the idea of God. Once received it has a perpetual lodgment in the heart, from whence it requires a long-continued habit of voluntary neglect even partially to expel it. This idea finds a home where other ideas are but visitors, and it presents an aspect of majesty and glory before which all others shrink into meanness. There is nothing which man would so naturally be as a worshipper and servant of God, were his heart in its normal condition of purity; it is alienation from God alone which prevents so felicitous an issue, and gives to infinitely inferior claims a practical advantage.

I have thus, my brethren, endeavoured to show that, by throwing us entirely on an intellectual knowledge of himself, God has done us no wrong; that he has placed in the way of our recognition and service of himself no difficulty; but that, on the contrary, he has thus placed religion in harmony with common life, and himself in the fairest possible position

for engaging our regard. Let us now apply this conclusion to practical purposes.

In the first place, *let us make a contented and diligent use of the means of divine knowledge to which we are confined.* Our cravings to see God, whatever be their vehemence, cannot be gratified. Him "no man hath seen or can see" (1 Timothy vi. 16); nor can sensible representations of him really advance our conception of his glory. The forms of Christianity which have incorporated this element, have lost in power over the moral affections more than they have gained in excitement of the imagination. What is any one the wiser or the better for seeing God the Father painted as a venerable old man, God the Son carved on a stone or a wooden cross, or God the Holy Spirit represented as a dove with outspread wings? Celebrated pictures of the nativity, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, the last judgment—what have they done for religion? What real devoutness has originated from viewing a piece of the true cross, or from handling one of the nails with which the Redeemer was pierced? To ask these questions is to render unnecessary the indignant negative with which they must be answered. All the true devotion ever associated with such objects has been brought to them, not excited by them, and they tend rather to degrade than to heighten, rather to materialize than to spiritualize, that which is brought to them. There is unspeakably more communion of saints in a serious reflection on "the general assembly and church of the first-born," than amidst the thousand holy men whose gorgeous portraits crowd the royal chapel at Berlin. The entire system is pernicious, and to its very last remnants should be totally discarded. It either diverts attention to the contemplation of human genius, or gives to *quasi-religious* emotions an imaginative character, which at the best is near akin to superstition, and easily glides into it. There is not one of the ordinary occupations of the world which would not in the same manner suffer, if similar pains were taken to dry up the springs of its energy, or to divert their current into a different channel.

While it is better that we should content ourselves with the means of divine knowledge to which God has restricted us, it is undoubtedly of the greatest importance that we should make a diligent use of them. The knowledge of God

does not come of itself. It is, like other knowledge, to be acquired, and, like other knowledge, it requires attention and study. Nothing less can be expected. O yes! you may be ignorant. Whosoever will may be ignorant, either of this or of anything else; but whosoever will may learn. What ample pages of wisdom has God himself spread before us for our instruction! How much do his works tell of his excellency! And how much more his Word! While "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews i. 3), is exhibited to us in his Son Jesus Christ. By means of this holy book, you may know God more thoroughly than any other object can be known; for human sciences are, not only theoretically, but practically, imperfect, and advances made in them lead for the most part to no practical changes: but the knowledge of God, though far from being theoretically perfect, is practically so, and presents to you all that it could be useful to you to know. Were you told everything, for your real interest you would be no wiser than you may be now. What a reward is this for a diligent and thoughtful study of the Bible!

In the second place, *let us mark the necessity of reconciliation to God.* The secret of the world's forgetfulness is alienation. Men do "not like to retain God in their knowledge," and, even if they saw him with their eyes, after the first startling effect was over they would practically forget him. Like some of old, they would say "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job xxi. 14). And so will your heart serve you, dear hearer, if it be not reconciled to God. Have you not already felt the influence of its estrangement from him? Into what other element can you resolve your past forgetfulness of him? Why else is it that, reminded of him by so many benefits, and addressed by such gracious messages, you are practically regardless of him still? Say not that you think you should reverence and love him if you might see him, for you would greatly deceive yourself by such a pretext. It is not so much your eye that awakens your heart, as your heart that directs your eye. Practically, you do not see those to whom you are averse, and this is the only reason why you do not practically see God. Come nearer to him in the spirit of your mind. Set your heart on his favour, and seek it through his beloved Son. Once having learned to love him, you will think of him easily;

you will find it hard, indeed, to forget him, when he shall have become your "chief joy."

In the third place, *let us remember the importance of meditative communion with God.* I have said that a loving heart will find it hard to forget him, but I may say likewise that even loving hearts forget him too often. A multiplicity of affairs drive out of remembrance thoughts which would be far more welcome, while the fervour of love itself is too apt to quick decay. Under such circumstances nothing is more needful for us than retired communion with God, and nothing can make amends to us for the want of it. "It is good for me," said one of old, "to draw near to God" (Psalm lxxiii. 28); and again, "My meditation of him shall be sweet" (Psalm civ. 34). O Christian! remember that you have to live "as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews xi. 27). Retire to your secret place, that there you may find that gracious God whom so many things conspire to banish from the world over which he rules, and in whose renewed companionship you may return with joy to its walks of duty and of trial. Do not be afraid of the crowd of secularities which habitually throng you, and which it may seem to you that your efforts can never dissipate. Only enter into your chamber, and shut the door; and your Father who seeth in secret will meet you there. Your searching thoughts will speedily find him whom your soul loveth, and his conscious presence shall gladden your heart, and renew your strength. Under no circumstances neglect this, your wisdom and security, lest forgetfulness indulged become permanent, and you backslide from God "by a perpetual backsliding."

In the fourth place, *let us anticipate with solemnity the future expansion of our knowledge.* "No man hath seen God at any time." He makes no appeal to the senses. It is well. The senses are instruments of knowledge as evanescent as they are feeble. Only temporarily do they belong to us. But the faculties of the mind are permanent, and they are destined to acquire a vast enlargement of power when our bodily frame decays. What views of God may await us then! How joyous! Or how full of woe! God no longer unseen, but seen; and, once beheld, never to be forgotten more. Let us solemnly prepare for that magnificent, and to us all-important, vision. O may those unveiled glories constitute the source of our everlasting joy!

HYMN.

Not with our eyes of flesh can we
 The Lord's essential nature see;
 But to our thoughts he stands revealed,
 And by the mind must be beheld.

'Tis fitly so. What sense could bear
 The glory which our souls revere;
 When all that labouring thought can do
 To climb the height falls far below?

Not dimly seen, Eternal One,
 Viewed in thy works, thy Word, thy Son;
 Nor shall my warm affection rove,
 If once my heart is taught to love.

O keep me near thee, Great Unseen—
 The veil of sense yet hangs between:
 Till I unveiled may see thy face,
 And on thy brightest glories gaze.

LECTURE XII.

GOD MANIFEST HEREAFTER.

"I shall see God."—*Job* xix. 26.

IN my last Lecture I endeavoured to show that God, although not perceived by the senses, is nevertheless of easy conception and realization; a position of which there are, indeed, many proofs in the actual experience of human life. If by many God is forgotten, and is as though he were not, to many, both of those who love and those who hate him, he is a deeply interesting reality; some cannot forget him if they would, others would not forget him if they could. He lives in the terrors of the one class, and in the joys of the other. At present, however, though it cannot be said that God is unperceived, it cannot be said that he is manifest. The fact that he is withdrawn from sensible observation attaches to him still, in common with the whole universe of spiritual being, a measure of concealment after the complete removal of which man's embodied spirit seems to pine. And

the craving shall be gratified. The concealment shall not be perpetual. A full discovery of him awaits us.

It is not that during our continuance in the present state any further discoveries of God are to be expected. All that we are to know in this world we doubtless know now; but a change is coming over us, and not over ourselves only, but over the dispensations of God towards us also, one effect of which will assuredly be to unveil to our admiring eyes the wonders of his being.

I. To the NATURE AND INFLUENCE OF THE CHANGE to which I have thus adverted, I shall, in the first place, direct your attention. I have spoken of it as twofold; as, on the one hand, affecting ourselves, and as, on the other hand, affecting the dispensations of God towards us.

Let us first contemplate this change as affecting ourselves.

You will anticipate me when I say, that I refer to that solemn event which awaits us all, the occurrence of death. Undoubtedly, mystery attaches to death, both in itself and in its immediate influence on us; but, whatever the effect of death may be in other respects (unless it be annihilation, a notion which I need not here stop either to disprove or to deny), it will assuredly introduce us into a state of being apart from the bodily senses. The body itself inanimate and laid in the grave, it is manifest that whatever conscious being survives must be of an exclusively spiritual kind, and wholly independent of the corporeal organization. In my own judgment no doubt attaches to the consciousness and energy of the human spirit after death, or to its immediate competency to the perceptions and activities of the spiritual world; but, whatever may be the case in this respect, even after the resurrection, and in the final state of man, his existence will be equally independent of the bodily senses. The entire region with which mankind will then be conversant will be spiritual, presenting no scope for the employment of the senses, even if they were in existence; while the body itself is to be raised, not a natural, but "a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians xv. 44). By this phrase, whatever may be its complete signification, I suppose we are to understand at least this—that the body, as recovered from the grave, will be perfectly adapted to the uses of a spiritual being in a spiritual world. This is, of course, much more than can be said of the body now. It is at present adapted to the uses

of a spiritual being in a material world, and is at once a suitable and necessary medium of our communication with it. It is so, however, not only for that which it discloses to us, but for that also which it hides from us. Of important use to us, for example, is the eye for that which it enables us to discern; but of use scarcely less important is it for that which it prevents us from discerning. If it is an inlet to the lights of the material world, it is a screen from the more brilliant lights of the world of spirit. It can see one or more properties of matter, and these only; it cannot see the properties of spirit. And hence, undoubtedly, a part of its usefulness. Here we are not to see spirit, but matter only. Crowded with spiritual beings as the earth may occasionally, or even habitually, be, nothing of them or of their doings are we directly to know; but our sphere of being is veiled off from theirs, and this by the very instrumentality of the organs which minister to our assistance. Like the light of which it avails itself, the eye shuts us out from a region far larger and more glorious than that to which it introduces us. And it is the same with all the senses; they are exclusive, as well as inclusive. They include a small sphere, and exclude a larger one.

As adapted to our use in a spiritual world, then, our bodies must not be precisely what they are now; and in this respect especially they must differ, namely, that the senses must be abolished. In that region, on the one hand, their exclusive power could not be tolerated, for all the realities and glories of the spiritual world are to be open to us; and, on the other hand, their instrumental power would be insufficient, for they would be utterly inadequate to the most immediate and necessary perceptions. Our bodies as recovered from the grave, therefore, will assuredly not bring with them the organs of sense.

The view which I have thus given of the future condition of the human body is to be regarded as altogether general. It has been conceived by some persons that the spiritual body is to be a prerogative of the righteous only, and that the wicked will be raised in flesh and blood. I cannot here go at large into a refutation of this notion, I shall only say that I see no foundation for it. If, indeed, the spiritual nature of the future body were a matter either of sanctified character or of divine favour, I could see why it should be

restricted to the righteous; but I regard it as a purely physical element, a point in which the nature of man is to be adapted to his position. Placed in a material world, his body was of a kind adapted to it; placed in a spiritual world, his body will undergo a change adapting it to that world also. This, in truth, is as necessary for the wicked as for the righteous; for they will have to do with spiritual objects, and to derive their sorrows from spiritual sources.

It may be asked, if the senses are to be wanting, what means of perception are to replace them? It is not, of course, to be expected that I can answer this question. Little as we know, however, about spiritual beings in detail, it is obvious that they must have some means of perception and communication. How far either similar or analogous to the corporeal senses these may be, it is clearly impossible to say; but, from the greater excellency of unembodied spiritual beings as a class, it is natural to infer that they will be of far superior power. The human body is too evidently a clog on the soul, and an impediment to its action, not to satisfy us that death will prove a release to fettered energies, and that the faculties of the emancipated spirit will burst forth into a vigour previously unknown and unconceived.

Now if, hereafter, human spirits be able to see other spirits, why not also God, who is a spirit? Concerning the knowledge of the coming world an intimation is given by the apostle Paul which may be not inapplicable here. "Now," says he, "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians xiii. 12). It is certain that we do not now know as we are known. We are known in one manner, and we know in another. We are not set "face to face" with the beings with whom we have to do, but, while they look directly into ours, we look "through a glass darkly" into theirs. This state of things, however, is to be altered, and greatly altered. As spiritual beings now know us so are we hereafter to know them, and their countenances are to be as "naked and open" to our gaze as now ours are to theirs. Though not with eyes of flesh, yet with the eyes of the mind, we shall "see God."

The effect of the solemn change we are contemplating will assuredly be to place us at once in the immediate presence of God. He now beholds us, and nothing but the veil of flesh

prevents us from perceiving him. When death withdraws that veil, the presence of God is that which will most immediately force itself upon us. Other spirits may or may not be there; but God will certainly be there—a presence, indeed, in the glory of which all other beings would be lost, whatever were their number or their majesty.

A second view of the change which awaits us is to be taken. It will affect not ourselves only, but the dispensations of God towards us.

At present our condition is probationary; and it belongs to this condition that we should be appealed to by considerations of persuasive power, but that we should not be so much pressed by them as to leave no proper scope for choice. Now, were heaven and hell in our sight, or God palpably and immediately present with us, such appearances would be overwhelming, and interfere with our freedom of action. Hence, in accordance with the probationary nature of his present administration, God places himself, not wholly out of our view, but at a certain distance from us, in order to render our recollection of him voluntary, and to allow us to forget him if we are inclined to do so. He thus partially hides himself for the purposes of his moral government, and of the discipline it involves.

At death this probation terminates, and the divine administration assumes a different phase. Then commences retribution, and God's repayment into our own bosom of the conduct we have pursued towards him. For this purpose the veil is to be withdrawn, and God will make himself manifest to us. The presentation of motive is no longer the object in view, it is rather the expression of God's approbation or disapprobation according to our deeds; and to this nothing is either more suitable or more conducive than a direct and simple discovery of the Deity, in a manner at once putting to flight all doubt of the fact, and setting at defiance all attempts at neglect. Yes, then, by spiritual perception, we shall "see God;" for it is the vision of him, and of his angry or smiling countenance, which is the substance of our future destiny.

II. It being thus evident that death will effect a twofold change so great that we may be said after it to "see God," let us now inquire IN WHAT MANNER THIS VISION OF THE DEITY MAY BE CONCEIVED OF.

We could understand this, it may be said, if God were, like other spirits, a finite being ; but he is infinite, and how is the perception even of a disembodied spirit to comprehend him ? He fills all things : where or how can he be beheld ?

1. Here it will be recollected that God has already assumed in fact a form strictly visible, by the incarnation of the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity. It is a deeply interesting thought that the divine nature should have become thus intimately allied with that of any creature, and that God should thus condescend, as it were, to divest himself, practically, of those attributes which so absolutely separated him from all other beings. And more particularly is this an interesting thought to us, whose nature he has thus marvellously assumed in order to effectuate the richest purpose of his grace in our redemption.

It is to be remembered that this is not merely a manifestation of God in human nature, but strictly, in the language employed by the apostle, "God manifest" in it (1 Timothy iii. 16). Difficult as it may be of conception—it is of impossible comprehension—the Scriptures clearly reveal to us the fact, that the person of our Lord Jesus Christ is constituted by a union of the two natures, the human and the divine. He was as truly God as he was truly man, and he is so still. As he brought with him to earth his proper divinity, linked with all the limitations of humanity, so he has carried with him into heaven his proper humanity, elevated to a sublime association with the divinity. The human body, as well as the human spirit, has Jesus taken as a garment to his celestial home, and he still wears it there. It is, doubtless, as the apostle calls it, a "glorious body" as transformed already into the pattern of the resurrection, but it is much more glorious as made the vehicle to innumerable beholders of divine manifestation. In this respect the body of Jesus occupies above a position very different from that which it held below. Here its office was, so to speak, to mitigate and soften the splendour of the divine majesty resident within, in order that it might be accommodated to the gaze of mortal eyes, and the opacity of the veil through which that splendour had to penetrate pre-eminently fitted it to answer that important purpose ; but there this part of its functions ceases, since the divine glory needs a veil no more. It is now, as it were, a transparent medium, affording ready

passage to the brightest beams of Deity, and only giving perceptible form and intelligent expression to the infinite attributes which it serves to interpret. How a human form *can* become thus expressive of the divine who can tell? But if, even in its humiliation, God was manifest in it, how much more in its glorification! What a spectacle this will be for angelic hosts, of whom it may be truly said that they have never seen so much of God before! How delightful and endearing to the ransomed from among men, thus at length to behold him whom, not having seen, they had learned to love!

2. There is thus one mode in which God will hereafter be beheld, and it cannot be doubted that this will be a principal mode of the manifestation of the divine glory in the heavenly world. I am aware, however, that this view will not meet all necessities. There must undoubtedly be some manifestation of the Deity, both antecedent to this in point of time, and of more universal application, as well as of more comprehensive scope—including, that is to say, the whole of the divine Trinity. Yet it is certain that, apart from the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, no expectation of a manifestation of God *in form* can be entertained. This would be quite incompatible with the infinity of his nature. He must then be additionally manifest in his attributes and character.

Such a manifestation of God is clearly possible to all whom he has endowed with a capacity of knowing him, and its extent and intensity can be subject to no other limits than those imposed by the nature of the capacity bestowed. It is thus he makes himself known to us in a manner suited to our present capacity. He bids us read such lessons of his power, wisdom, and goodness, as his works of nature and his deeds of providence convey; he bids us learn his justice and his holiness from his law, his grace and faithfulness from his Gospel. Heedless as mankind in general are of these lessons, they lodge themselves effectually in some minds, and may, at the divine pleasure, be impressed with inconceivable power. It cannot be doubted that God might convey to the human mind a sense of his glory so intense that the animal frame would sink under the force of it. No such source of weakness, however, will exist beyond the grave. Of far ampler power to know will the spirit then be, and of far mightier strength to sustain its

burden ; and these expanded and invigorated powers may be fed with knowledge after the same manner as now.

Who can tell what works of creating skill and energy may await our contemplation in realms now unpenetrated by mortal eye ; not merely in the innumerable material worlds which glisten in the nearer or the farther sky, but in those regions immaterial allotted to the abode of spiritual beings ? Beauty everywhere, unparalleled beauty must be there, and developments of wisdom, power, and goodness, raising our conception of these attributes to a pitch of vividness and force before unknown. Who can tell what discovery the undrawn veil may permit of the conscious presence of God throughout the infinite, and of his actual application to the vast and minute affairs of his providence, carrying to an unwonted height our conceptions of his omnipresence and benignity ? Who can tell what intimate sense of the relation between the Creator and the creature may give new power to our perceptions of obligation and of duty, and set before us his righteousness as a moral Governor with a force of conviction far more than silencing all objections ? Who can tell what disclosures may be made of the emotions of that loving heart which pitied so tenderly our ruined race, and redeemed them at so vast a cost, giving an emphasis to the declaration that "God is love" beyond all present imagination ? We who have learned something of God by the lessons vouchsafed to us here, are conscious of a capability of acquiring larger knowledge by more ample instruction. We can learn the lessons of immortality ; and to learn them will emphatically be to behold God. Assuredly he will be to us such a being as he has never been.

There is no reason to apprehend that this kind of manifestation of the Deity—a manifestation by attributes and character—will be wanting in personality. It is true that, ordinarily, our conception of personality is associated with ideas of form and substance ; but these are rather the accidents than the essentials of it, and are by no means necessary to it. Certain attributes belong personally to ourselves, and wherever we discern the attributes we also recognize the personality to which they belong. The transference of the idea of personality is natural and immediate. Thus the attributes of God, in such ampler measure as that in which they may hereafter be disclosed to us, will not be

to us elements of an impersonal existence, as attributes of *deity*, but will cluster round and glorify a personal being, as attributes of God.

One consideration more may be added. It will be the business of God, so to speak, in the next world to make himself felt by us. The direct expression of his approbation or disapprobation towards every individual of mankind, constitutes the very attitude of retribution in which he will stand towards us. For this purpose it will be necessary that he should come infinitely near to us. He must make himself felt in our inmost hearts, and he must make himself felt in a way which implies that he must be largely and intensely known. His approbation and disapprobation are to constitute to our moral powers the sources of highest joy or deepest woe ; a result which can be obtained only by conveying to us perceptions of his glory and excellency of the amplest and most vivid kind. It can be only then, when we behold God, that his frown can be hell, and his smile an everlasting heaven.

Having thus presented to you, dear brethren, some illustrations of the general sentiment that God will be manifest hereafter, I conclude with two or three appropriate reflections.

First, *what a wonderful state of things is before us !* A summary description of the future world may be given in this single phrase, GOD MANIFEST. God is here, but he is not manifest. He hides himself behind the veil of sense which, for his present purposes, he has stretched between himself and us, so that we may not see him ; but then he will be beheld without a veil. He will be so beheld that he cannot be misunderstood, cannot be neglected, cannot be forgotten. He will manifestly fill all things, and be by every individual vividly realized as the source of pleasure or of pain. There will be no "fool" there, to exclaim, "There is no God."

Secondly, *what a wonderful mode of life will this be for us !* Now, indeed, we live, and move, and have our being, in God, and he is not far from every one of us ; yet we live at our ease, and pursue our affairs as though he were not. What a different scene this world would become to us, if even here God were manifest ! But what will it be to us to view him hereafter, when our eyes shall be open, and his glory unveiled ! And to view him when his function shall be to

render to us according to that which we have done ! What a touching element this thought throws into that coming vision ! Ah ! my brethren, we are not to behold God as a mere spectacle, exhibited to gratify our curiosity, or to gain our admiration ; we are to behold him as our Ruler and our Judge, and to derive from his aspect towards us interminable joy or woe. Sinner, are you prepared for that vision ? Will it not smite you with terror and despair ? You who cannot endure to think of God now, how will you endure to behold him then ? Now you can shield yourself from his intrusion by thoughtlessness, and can say, "Depart from me : " alas ! how vain such an effort hereafter ! That glorious presence, that awful frown, will never depart from you ; it will be the ever-present element and terror of your future existence. Will you encounter such a peril ? This time of reconciliation and day of grace, has it no value for you ? Will you not acquaint yourself with God while you may be at peace with him, and accept his inestimable friendship through his Son ?

But I turn to another class of you, dear hearers, to whom I have to tender the heartiest congratulations. God is already no stranger to you, nor are you strangers to him. Once alienated, you have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. In him you have seen the Father's glory, and obtained an interest in the Father's love. Here it is your endeavour and your joy to live "as seeing him who is invisible," and in humble faith you walk with God. O ! what blessedness does the opening future present to you ! How unspeakable will be your felicity, when you shall behold unveiled that glorious countenance in the veiled light of which you have lived so happily below ! When you shall be for ever nigh to him from whom so many things now divide you, and lose the dim and shadowy lights which have sustained your faith in a clear and everlasting vision of his brightest glories !

Finally, *what an interesting and solemn life it is that a Christian leads on earth !* It is a life of communion with God ; essentially, therefore, the same as heaven, and only in its accidents differing from it. How serious, how vivid, how practical, should that communion be ! Not distant, not reluctant, not formal. O no ! What would heaven itself be if such elements were transferable thither ? It is a life of communion with God which passes into the vision of God. A beginning, not an end ; progress, not stagnation ; a germ,

not without its weakness, but destined to a splendid development. Solemn attitude ! Christian, thou art expecting to behold God, and waiting till he draws back the parting veil that now conceals him from thee. Art thou ready for that vision ? And, should it come, canst thou say, "This is my God ; I have waited for him ; I will rejoice and be glad in his salvation" (Isaiah xxv. 9) ?

HYMN.

AH ! when my soul disrobed shall be
Of this obtuse mortality,
And I shall see, as spirits do,
What eyes of flesh could never view,

I shall behold thee, living God,
And feel thy being spread abroad ;
The Invisible made manifest,
In heaven and hell alike confessed.

Then shall my quickened spirit prove
Thy power intense of wrath or love ;
Thy God-like smile or frown to know,
Shall be my endless weal or woe.

To me the blessedness be given,
Great God, to dwell with thee in heaven ;
And present tokens of thy love,
As earnest of the joys above !

ON
GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN:

TEN LECTURES

DELIVERED AT

DEVONSHIRE SQUARE CHAPEL,

BISHOPSGATE STREET, LONDON.

PREFACE.

THESE Lectures were delivered to the congregation over which I have the happiness to preside, during the months of January, February, and March, of the present year; and they form a kind of sequel to the Lectures on Acquaintance with God addressed to the same auditory in the spring of 1855, and subsequently published.

In introducing to the reader my Lectures on Acquaintance with God, I stated that they had been delivered without any thought of publication. Of the Lectures now presented to him I cannot say the same thing. It was the wish of my people that I should deliver a series of discourses to be afterwards put into a more permanent form, and—whether reluctantly or otherwise it is not material to state here—I acceded to a wish at once so kind and so gratifying.

The intention to publish affected in some measure my choice of a subject; that which I selected being recommended to me, in part by its connexion with my former Lectures, in part by its fundamental importance, and in part by its less frequent treatment.

The same circumstance has also affected the manner, as well as the matter, of the book. In order to diminish my labour in writing out the Lectures for the press—for they were preached, as is my wont when I write at all, from brief and fragmentary notes—my friends kindly provided a shorthand writer, who supplied me with verbatim reports of them as delivered. That I have derived no advantage from these reports I can by no means affirm; but, in so far as I had hoped that a mere revision of my spoken discourses might have sufficed to prepare them for the printer, I have been wofully disappointed. I have long had an opinion that spoken and written composition ought not to resemble each other; but, however this may be, it is now clear to me that

my spoken style has far too much familiarity—repetition, and a hundred other faults—to be fit for printing; and I take this opportunity of expressing an earnest hope that none of my friends will, at any time, send to the press any of my sermons of which notes may have been taken.

To return, however, to the subject immediately before me. The actual revision of the reporter's manuscript has given me a great deal of trouble—as much, I think, or nearly as much, as if I had re-written the whole matter. And, what is worse, it has still left the composition of these discourses in an unsatisfactory condition. The style is now, as it seems to me, a sort of mongrel, neither that of the pulpit nor that of the study—neither writing nor talking—but something of both. For this fault, however, I must for this once—if forgiven this time I will never repeat it—throw myself on the kindness of my readers. I am sure that, if they knew how much it has cost me to correct a portion of the mass, they would, if for mere charity, forgive me the rest.

While speaking thus apologetically of the style of these discourses, I am bound to add that I have no apology to offer for the sentiments contained in them. In their delivery nothing was advanced without the prayerful and earnest exercise of such powers of thought as God has given me; and in preparing them for the press I have found no reason to modify the instructions of the pulpit. If I have written anything contrary to the glory of God and the grace of his Gospel, may I be forgiven, both by him and by his people; but if anything vindicating his honour and illustrating his ways, let the reader give to it the consideration of which it is worthy.

Although a circumstance comparatively trivial, it may be proper to add, that the delay in the appearance of the work beyond the time for which it was advertised is owing to a somewhat severe illness, by which I have, for several weeks, been incapacitated for labour of every kind.

HIGHGATE, *November 6th*, 1856.

ON GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN.

LECTURE I.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS SCOPE; OR, MAN SUSCEPTIBLE OF GOVERNMENT.

“In him we live, and move, and have our being.”—*Acts* xvii. 28.

I HAVE announced my intention to deliver, if health and strength be granted me, a set of Lectures on God's Government of Man. The subject I have chosen stands closely related to that which engaged your attention in the course of last spring, when I delivered a series of discourses on Acquaintance with God, and during these discourses it was cursorily touched; but I have resolved on giving it more extended notice in consequence of its extreme interest and importance.

The thrilling interest of our subject cannot be overrated. God's government of man is the noblest of all his works with which we have been made acquainted. It forms a magnificent theatre for the display of his most glorious attributes, and exhibits his arrangements for the disposal of vast and momentous interests. It is, moreover, of peculiar and unspeakable importance to us, inasmuch as we are the subjects of it, and shall find developed in it his mode of dealing with ourselves. Our only hope of regulating our conduct wisely, or of avoiding, not only pernicious, but fatal mistakes, lies in a just acquaintance with its principles and its administration.

It is true, indeed, that the subject on which I am to speak is not directly evangelical, yet it stands so closely related to the Gospel as to derive from this consideration also an augmented interest. Although God's government of man is not redemption, redemption is a process grafted upon it, and controlled by its ruling laws. If we are now to look more

particularly at that part of his administration towards our race which was immediately antecedent to redemption, in it we shall find the foundation-stones upon which the evangelical dispensation rests. It is impossible to understand the latter of these apart from the former, since our views of the one will, in material points, determine our views of the other. The first requisite, indeed, in order to know the Gospel, is to know the law out of the breach of which it springs; and an invaluable help towards an appreciation of the method of mercy, is to be derived from a sound interpretation of that method of justice to which it is an appendix and a sequel.

I have said that the subject of these Lectures is God's government of MAN. It is not man only that God governs. We recognize adoringly his absolute supremacy, and his government of the entire universe. To employ the language of the Psalmist—

“The Lord hath established his throne in the heavens,
And his kingdom ruleth over all.”

Psalm ciii. 19.

And the thought may well inspire universal gladness. Justly does the sweet singer of Israel exclaim—

“Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength,
That do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.
Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts;
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
Bless the Lord, all his works,
In all places of his dominion.”

Verse 20-22.

I speak of God's government of man, however, in a special sense; not in respect of the properties which it has in common with his universal dominion, but in respect of a peculiarity which attaches to it: for by a distinctive feature it stands out from his universal dominion, and this is now to be the subject of our close attention.

You ask me, then, What is the peculiarity which distinguishes God's government of man? I observe, in reply, that his dominion is of two kinds; it is, on the one hand, a dominion of force, and, on the other, a dominion of persuasion. His dominion of force manifests itself everywhere. By it he guides the starry worlds in their wondrous courses, and regulates the physical agencies of the world we inhabit, with its tribes of living creatures. All nature feels it, and

man himself is in some respects subject to it. Not in all respects, however, is this dominion of force applied to man. There is evidently a sphere within which he is treated on a different system. He is placed in circumstances which supply motives to action, and make influential appeals both to his feelings and his reason. In addition to this, exhortations are addressed to him, and are enforced by various topics of encouragement and warning. His interests, both immediate and remote, are made to depend upon his conduct, and he is left to give to the topics presented to him such consideration as he may think proper. All these things betoken a system, not of force, which is obviously abandoned, but of persuasion, employed in its stead. It is to this feature in the ways of God towards man that I now direct your attention. It is a system of treatment by motive, or of government by persuasion, and its importance is manifestly as great as its peculiarity. It will be our business to examine its conditions and its tendency, its objects and its issues.

It is clear that, in order to any just government by persuasion, several conditions are necessary; but, as these will in succession come under review, it is not needful for me to refer in detail to them here. On this occasion I confine myself to one of these conditions, and to that which is evidently the first. For a government of this kind there should be a proper scope. It assumes in the beings who are subjected to it a capability of appropriate action.

I may make here the general observation, that action, as presented to our conception, is of two kinds: it is either primary or secondary; primary when it originates with the agent, and secondary when it is communicated to the agent by another party. God's action is primary; it originates with himself. The action of the beasts of the field, and of the stars of heaven, is secondary; it does not originate with themselves, but they move as they are moved, and act as they are acted upon. To use another pair of terms distinctive of these two kinds of action, I may say that in primary action the agent acts independently, or of and from himself; while in secondary action the agent is dependent on the power by which he is impelled.

Now it is obvious that no just government by persuasion can be instituted, unless the party subjected to it have a power of independent action; a power by which he can origi-

nate action as its primary author, and by which also he can accept, repel, and otherwise modify, all persuasives addressed to him. Under no other circumstances, indeed, could persuasion itself exist. If I can act only as I am acted upon, and have no choice, it were as vain to attempt to persuade me as to make a similar attempt on the wind or the sea, the sun or the stars.

A fair question, then, arises, and it is the first question which our subject brings out, namely, whether man possesses a capacity of independent action; in other words, whether he is a being to whom persuasive topics can with fitness be addressed? To this question a plausible, and in some instances a confident, negative has been returned. There is a school of philosophers who lay it down that man has no capacity of independent action. They teach us that he is acted upon as the beasts of the field and the stars of heaven are; that is, by a power exterior to himself, and more or less immediately by God, since all secondary causes are only God in a remoter form. They insist that this necessarily flows from man's dependence on his Maker. And they gain, in truth, a measure of plausible countenance for such an opinion from the Scripture itself, when it instructs us, as in the passage I have chosen as a text, that "in him we live, and move, and have our being." What they conclude from this language is that all our conduct is simply God in us, and that he is in reality the doer of all things. Now, plausible as, to a certain extent, this representation is, I shall take it up for direct consideration with a view to show its fallacy, and to bring out the opposite truth. I reject, then, the opinion thus presented to us; and I do so for the following reasons.

I. I reject the opinion that man has no power of independent action, BECAUSE IT LEADS TO INADMISSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.

This is a test of opinions at once easy, fair, and infallible. There are some things which we reckon so certain, so unquestionable, so undeniably true, that we conclude at once that whatever is inconsistent with them, or leads to a contradiction of them, must, whether we can show it or not, be false. If, for example, any philosopher should, by acute metaphysical reasoning, endeavour to disprove the existence of an external world, and to resolve all outward phenomena into mere

sensation, it would be sufficient for the rudest rustic to reply to him, "Your argument cannot be true, since your conclusion is manifestly false. That there is an external world I know; I see it, I hear it, I handle it, and the concurrent testimony of all my senses on such a matter cannot be mistaken."

We may thus deal with the argument before us, even without considering the force of the reasoning it contains, by tracing the consequences to which it leads. And these are surely inadmissible.

For, first, if it be so that men have no power of independent action, this throws the whole Bible into confusion and absurdity. The Bible contains a vast amount of exhortation addressed to men. You recollect the statement which our Lord gives of "the first and great commandment"—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" "and the second," says he, "is like unto it—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew xxiii. 37, 39). You recollect also the account which the apostle gives of the recompenses connected severally with the conduct of men. God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (Romans ii. 6-8). A very large part of the Bible consists of matter of this kind, in itself more or less persuasive, and addressed for the purpose of persuasion to men; but all this, if, as our philosophers tell us, man has no power of independent action, is not only vain, but absurd—quite as absurd as if you should exhort so many oxen; for by this argument we are all included with the irrational creatures in one common category of incapacity. And we cannot call it simply absurd, for the whole Bible thus becomes flagrantly unjust; since, on this supposition, it calls upon men to do what is impossible, and sets before them consequences which they can neither embrace nor avoid, and thus represents a system, not of equity, but of undeniable tyranny. Now are we prepared for this? Our philosophers of course are. "The Bible?" say they. "O yes! Old wives' fables; cast it aside." We, however, are not yet ready for such an issue. We revere the blessed book too highly, and love it too dearly, to be willing to part with it so easily; nor

will we, for we know the Bible to be true, and we shall hold it fast, whatever may become of any specious form of philosophy.

Secondly, the opinion that man has no power of independent action makes God the author of sin. If, indeed, everything in human conduct had been pure and good, it might have been an admissible and pleasant thought that what appeared to have been done by man had been really done by God, and we might without dishonour have been able to refer the whole to him; but, when we think how culpable, how impure, how malignant, the conduct of man in a multitude of instances has been, the idea of imputing it to God is utterly intolerable. If we deem that man has a power of independent action, and that he, originating action, has originated sin—this, though melancholy, is tolerable; but to think that God is absolutely the doer of all things, the perpetrator of all sin, is dreadful beyond imagination. God is holy. He proclaims it as his nature and his glory that he is holy. He declares that he hates sin. He forbids it; he threatens to punish it, he has punished it, and a more signal exercise of his vengeance is yet to come. And, under cover of all this, is God the author of sin? Does he commit the extreme absurdity and the flagrant injustice of declaring that he hates his own deeds, and of denouncing punishment against himself? It cannot be. If God be holy, if he hates sin as he has declared he hates it, and will punish it as he has declared he will punish it, some way must be found of accounting for the commission of sin other than by saying, God has done it. This is a first principle and canon of all reasoning, that by no argument can God be made the author of sin.

Thirdly, the opinion that man has no power of independent action annihilates, in relation to his conduct, all moral distinctions. There is then no longer for him either moral good or evil, right or wrong, possibility of praise or blame; for all these belong to choice, and free, that is, independent, action. We do not say that it is wrong that the wind rises to a tempest, that the lightning destroys a life, or that a lion springs upon his prey; nor could we say that it was either right or wrong that man should perform any deed, good or evil as we now deem it, if he had, like them, no power of independent action. It is only because he has such a power,

that in him a thing is right or wrong which in another being would be indifferent. For him, therefore, all moral distinctions vanish before this notion. The perpetrator of crimes against which public indignation waxes hot, and cries aloud for vengeance, has no real culpability. The wholesale poisoner ought no more to be blamed than the wolf or the bear. An opinion which leads to such consequences as these cannot be true; it must be false. Even if I cannot detect its fallacy, it can never be worthy of my belief.

II. I reject the opinion that man has no power of independent action, BECAUSE IT RESTS UPON AN UNSOUND ARGUMENT.

I turn now from the consequences to which this opinion leads, and weigh the argument itself by which it is sustained.

What we are told is, that man is so closely connected with his Maker, and is so dependent upon the power that formed and upholds him, that he can have no capacity of independent action; God himself, consequently, must be really the doer of all that man seems to do.

In treating this argument, I acknowledge that God, as the Maker of man, not only brought all his powers into existence, but sustains them in existence. If he were to withdraw his supporting hand, man, like all other creatures, would sink again into nothing. Such I take to be the meaning, and the whole meaning, of the passage I read at the commencement of my discourse, the declaration that "in him we live, and move, and have our being."

I make a still further acknowledgment. It might be so that all the actions of men, like those of brutes, should be referable to God in a manner more or less immediate; there is nothing in the nature of the case to prevent it, had it been the Creator's good pleasure to order it so. The argument which we have to examine, however, goes further than this, and assumes that it is necessarily so. It is here that, in my judgment, the reasoning fails. For the question is not whether man has by necessity of nature, and as his own right, a power of independent action—no one affirms this; but whether God has in his good pleasure made him in some degree independent, and allotted him a sphere within which his deeds shall be truly his own.

The question is reducible to a simple alternative. If God,

in creating man, has not endowed him with a power of independent action it must be for one of two reasons; either because it is impossible in itself, and he cannot do it, or because it is useless and undesirable, and he will not do it. Let us look for a moment at this alternative.

To assert that God cannot do this is surely to put an unwarrantable limitation upon his power. It is not for us to say what God can do, or to set a limitation upon power which is absolute, infinite, almighty. It is clearly reasonable to admit that, if God pleased to do it, he might assign to man, although a creature, a scope of independent agency, a sphere within which he should act of and for himself. The task may require infinite skill, and its execution be, like creation in all its forms, beyond our comprehension; but there is nothing in the conception adapted to stamp it as impossible to him who made the worlds.

And, as it is unwarrantable to assert that God cannot do this, so we can have no ground for affirming that he will not do it. For aught we know, he may have been pleased to adopt such a course; and to lay it down that he will not cannot be less than presumptuous. We assuredly cannot dive so deep into the counsels of the Most High. Who can fathom the abyss of eternal wisdom in which the conception of a created being capable of independent action must have originated? There is certainly nothing upon the face of it by which a reason adverse to its execution might be suggested. It is neither physically nor morally unlovely, nor out of harmony with the universe to which it pertains.

It is obvious to remark, however, that there is a reason why, since it is possible, God should confer independence on man, namely, that it creates for him a new and important field of action. It opens to him a sphere of government, not by force, but by persuasion. Hence arises to him a motive, therefore, for assigning to man a scope of independent action, and to us a probability, in our estimate of his ways, that he has done so. It is surely like himself to open successively enlarging fields for his divine administration, while it would be to the last degree unlike him to shut himself up within the comparatively narrow limits of a physical dominion.

And this probability may be said to rise to a certainty, when we see that God has practically instituted a government of persuasion, and that he actually appeals to man as

if he could act for himself. Even apart from the Bible the existence of such a system is manifest; for the entire scheme of God's providence over man is full of appeals to his reason, a point in which his treatment of the human race differs widely from that of the brute creation; and it is inconceivable that the all-wise Ruler should have established a system consisting of persuasive elements, unless he had also conferred on man the independence necessary to his being affected by them.

I conclude, therefore, that the opinion that man has no independence of action rests upon an unsound argument; and that while, even if its fallacy could not be shown, it must be declared to be untrue, its fallacy is manifest and palpable. It assumes that incapacity for independent action is a necessary result of man's relation to his Maker; a conclusion entirely forbidden by God's infinite power, at variance with his multiform wisdom, and contradicted by his actual administration.

III. I reject the opinion that man has no power of independent action, BECAUSE OUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS REFUTES IT.

We all feel that we act independently. We are conscious that we are the originators of our own actions. We are sensible of impulses, we use consideration, we exercise choice. We prefer, we refuse; we approve, we condemn; we hesitate, we resolve. In all this we have no consciousness of any controlling or interfering power. It is ourselves who feel, consider, resolve, and act. Hence springs our sentiment of self-approbation or reproach, and hence we accept praise or blame without scruple, under the conviction that our actions, good or evil, are our own.

It may be asked, Is consciousness a true witness? Is it liable to no mistake? Is everything absolutely certain that consciousness tells us? To this question it is only necessary to reply, that, of all sources of evidence afforded to us, consciousness is the highest and most conclusive. Whatever may be the force with which impressions are conveyed to us by the senses, or conclusions presented to our understanding, nothing comes to us with so much clearness and certainty as the dictates of our own consciousness. It is the most direct and unquestionable testimony possible, which if a man believe not, he can no longer believe anything at all. He is thence-

forward sunk in an abyss of incredulity, and can have no faith even in his own existence. Ask me how I know that my actions are my own? I answer, I feel it. It is not that I suspect it, or that I think it. I am sure of it. Nothing that you can say can either convince me of it more deeply, or shake my conviction of it for a moment.

But, at any rate, this testimony of our own consciousness is either true or false. Now, if it be true, that concedes the whole question. There is, then, according to the testimony of our consciousness as a credible witness, a capacity of independent action belonging to us. But if it be false, what a strange world it is that we live in—a world not merely of fictions, but of delusions! What marvellous beings we are to come from the hand of a holy, benevolent, and righteous Maker! He has made us, it seems, of elements not less than contradictory; to believe that we are the authors of our own actions when we are not, to accept praise and blame when we do not deserve them, and to have a witness within us for right and wrong which witnesses lies. To place us thus in the midst of an entire world of deceits, is that like God? Does any one believe that he has done it? “A God of truth is he,” says the ancient prophet (Deuteronomy xxxii. 4), and it is undoubtedly most necessary to his glory that he should be so; but, if he had established such arrangements as these, he would not only have egregiously trifled with truth, but would have become the Author of a system of practical falsehood of unparalleled extent and injury.

IV. I reject the opinion that man has no power of independent action, BECAUSE THE COURSE OF HUMAN LIFE REFUTES IT.

See how we deal with one another. We praise and blame one another; we incessantly address to one another a thousand motives. The parent appeals to his children by a whole course of persuasive considerations, in order to train them to an honourable and virtuous character for future life. The magistrate employs similar elements, having even extreme severity of punishment among them, for regulating our social conduct. But this is simply because we believe that men are the authors of their own actions, and that God, neither directly nor indirectly, interferes with their choice.

In any case in which men are regarded as no longer the authors of their own actions, all these influences cease. If a

parent have the calamity to number among his children one born an idiot, the persuasive influences of education bear in a very slight degree upon him, and the exercise of paternal correction not at all. You may find the father using the rod with some severity on his other children, but he will never think of applying it to him. In the same way idiots in society are no longer subject to law. No officer arrests them, no magistrate condemns them, no evidence is taken against them, no guilt is imputed to them. If a person is found insane, he is simply committed to safe custody, should the security of himself or of others require it.

We thus undeniably believe one another to be the authors of our own actions. Take away this element, and the whole domestic and social fabric falls at once. Are you prepared for this? Are our philosophers prepared for it? Will they carry out their principle to its fair consequences? They ought to be prepared to do so as a test of their sincerity. Let them abandon the training of their children, and tell the magistrates that they have no concern to be protected by the law. Will they do this? They will not. And if no one will adopt it practically, is the theoretical notion of man's incapacity for independent action worth maintaining, or can it for a moment be supposed to be true?

V. I reject the opinion that man has no power of independent action, BECAUSE THE NATURE OF OUR MENTAL POWERS REFUTES IT.

Observe man's powers of action: what are they? Knowledge, feeling, choice, determination, execution—these are his faculties. They evidently constitute a machinery for action, and a machinery which, if there be wanting a regulating power, will go through its various processes by means of accidental excitement, external or internal. Then, what is it in man more than machinery? It becomes more than machinery by the addition of a single, but powerful, element. Man has a faculty of voluntary thought, and this is practically the ruler of his conduct. Just as he thinks he feels, just as he feels he resolves, just as he resolves he acts. Whoever can determine man's thoughts, therefore, can determine his conduct. Give me such possession of a man's mind that I can determine his thoughts, and I will make him do as I please; or give the man himself such a power over his own mind, and then he can do as he pleases. Now man

possesses such a power. You all know that you can think of what you please within the scope of your knowledge, and that by using your power of thought you habitually govern your feelings and your conduct. If there is a prudent course to which you are disinclined, or a fascinating one which your judgment condemns; if there is a strong excitement of feeling which you think it proper to subdue, or a state of unconcern from which it is important to arouse yourself; in these and a thousand similar cases, what is your remedial power? It is reflection. It is the only power which can be employed; but it is adapted, and it is always effectual, for its purpose.

There is, then, a faculty given to man by which he is capable of determining his own conduct, and of originating from himself his own life. Now, if God did not mean man to act independently, why did he give him this faculty? The possession of it is proof of the ability for self-government; and if, notwithstanding this faculty, God meant himself incessantly to act in man so that he should be the doer of everything, the least that can be said is that he has wrought elaborately for no result. He has made a wonderful and delicate machine which is of no use, and so wasted his ingenuity; the only purpose answered being to delude a few small creatures in his universe, as if in pleasantry, or in mockery. No, that is not like God; and it is marvellous that men should ever have thought it to be so.

These, then, are five reasons why I reject the opinion that man has no power of independent action: it leads to inadmissible consequences, and rests on a fallacious argument; while it is confuted alike by our own consciousness, by the course of human life, and by the nature of our mental powers. And this opinion being false, I hold the opposite of it to be true, and affirm that man has a power of independent action; not as a necessity or a right of his nature, but as a gift of his Maker's bounty and wisdom, and within such limitations as he has seen fit to prescribe.

Now, if man have a power of independent action, he is open to persuasion. Within certain limits he can do what he pleases; and within those limits he may be encouraged to one course, and warned against another. He may be appealed to by considerations drawn from every aspect of his duty and his interest, and addressing themselves to all his faculties of

feeling and of judgment. Motives of every kind which he is fitted to understand and appreciate may be congruously presented to him, he himself being left to dispose of them as he shall think best, and to receive the consequences attached to his deeds. Here, in a word, is a scope for the use of persuasion, and within it a systematic arrangement of requirements, motives, and issues—in other words, a government by persuasion—may be instituted without any violence to man's nature.

I thus make good my position that man is susceptible of government by persuasion. I may add that the sphere over which such government may extend is also clearly defined. Man is susceptible of government by persuasion only because he is capable of independent action, and he is susceptible of it, of course, only so far as his capability extends. That is the exact scope. Within that scope he may be addressed by motive; to carry that process beyond it were to act a part not so much tyrannical as absurd.

In concluding this discourse, I might make a remark upon the wonderful attitude which God assumes in so limiting his otherwise universal power. He might be the primary source of all action in the universe; but here is a small circle which he has been pleased partially to except from his natural dominion, in order to make man an independent agent within it. He thus puts, as it were, a fetter upon his own hand, forbids himself to enter by his power that little domain, and engages to address the occupant of it only by persuasion. How wonderful is this voluntary restriction of almighty power, in order to create a fair and equitable sphere for the exercise of moral influence! But I would rather now notice more particularly the position in which we find man thus to be placed: and I will do so in three points of view—its significance, its dignity, and its importance.

First, observe the significance of this position. Man is capable of acting of and from himself, and therefore the consequences of his actions, within the sphere of his independence, belong properly to himself. Here originates responsible agency, or action in respect of which the agent may be held answerable. Contemplate, for example, a deed issuing in a painful result—say, in loss of life. If you trace this to a storm or to a beast of prey, you ask no questions;

but if you trace it to a man, you naturally ask him **WHY**, and expect an answer to be given. He acts for himself, and, if no valid reason can be assigned to justify or to excuse the deed, you hold him liable to the consequences of it. The responsibility of an agent originates in his independence; it is for this reason that he is answerable for that which he has done, and must take the consequences, of whatsoever kind they may be, without complaint. Praise and blame in every form come justly to him on this ground.

Secondly, observe the dignity of this position. In this respect a place is given to man which raises him incalculably above all other beings in this world. You see the creatures about you. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, have no power of independent action, and act only as they are acted upon. Man, on the contrary, has a power of taking his own course. What he will do it remains for himself to determine. Many impulses move him, and he can choose to which he will yield. By a selection of the matters of his thought he can make his feelings what he pleases, and his conduct follows. He can debase himself to vice, or raise himself to virtue. Within the sphere allotted to him all is in his power. What a lofty elevation above the brute! What a marvellous approximation to the Deity! An absolute independence of action is one of his grand characteristics, and to enjoy a measure of similar independence lifts man to a resemblance of God altogether sublime.

Thirdly, observe the importance of this position. How necessary it is that man, who is thus made capable of acting for himself, should act thoughtfully! No such necessity of thought exists with relation to the brutes. We do not address counsels to the tenants of the field or the forest, for they act under unreasoning impulses; but we earnestly exhort man to take heed to his ways. His deeds are his own, and what comes out of his heart may make him liable to praise or blame of high degree. A charge of guilt may lie upon him, to the justice of which his conscience will testify, and upon which punishment may ensue. These things are incidental to a power of independent action, and they are indeed of the utmost gravity. Thoughtlessness! Let a beast be thoughtless, but let no man be so like a beast as to be thoughtless too. Let them be thoughtless whose

conduct involves no criminality, and can bring no retribution—whose deeds can merit no praise, and subject them to no shame; but for man to be thoughtless—man, at once capable of the noblest and liable to the most degrading courses—is not only vanity, but crime.

HYMN.

MAKER of this wondrous frame,
Teach me truly what I am :
To myself I would not be
Wrapped in baffling mystery.

Independent power is mine,
Shadow, mighty God, of thine ;
Willing fetter on thy hands,
Equal scope for thy commands.

Oh ! if deeds of wrong be done,
Not on thee can blame be thrown :
Sin and shame to me are due,
And the retribution too.

With what jealousy and care
I should walk where duties are !
Guide me by a heavenly light ;
Help me, Lord, to live aright !

LECTURE II.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS BASIS ; OR, GOD ENTITLED TO GOVERN.

“ Who is lord over us ? ” — *Psalms* xii. 4.

God's government of man, the subject of our present Lectures, I have already defined to be a government of persuasion as distinguished from a government of force. He declares his will, but does not compel our obedience ; he presents to us motives to compliance, and reserves to himself a right of ultimate retribution corresponding with the practical result.

In the opening of the subject I observed that a government of this kind, in order to be just, required the existence in

combination of several elements, of which the first was a proper scope for it. A being to be governed by persuasion, I said, should be open to persuasion, by possessing a capability of independent action; so that the system may be one, not of pretence and appearance merely, but of fairness and reality. We then entered upon an inquiry whether, in the case of man, such scope for government by persuasion actually exists; that is to say, whether he possesses a power of independent action, or whether he acts merely as he is acted on. We found some who maintain the latter position, and affirm that, although endowed with more complex machinery than they, man no more acts independently than the beasts of the field, or the stars of heaven; that he so lives in God and God in him, that, whether more or less directly, God in reality does all things. I rejected this opinion on the following grounds: that it both led to inadmissible consequences, and was founded on an unsound argument; while it was refuted at once by our own consciousness, by the course of human life, and by the nature of the mental faculties. I thus vindicated for man a capacity of independent action, and endeavoured to establish his claim to a primary and original agency.

From this point, then, I advance. Supposing it to be proved, and, taking it as proved, that man is capable of independent action, and so susceptible of being governed by persuasion without any violence being done to his nature, I ask a second question—Is any one entitled to govern him? This is evidently a very important question, and one upon the decision of which, not only much, but everything, yet depends; for, if there be no one entitled to govern man, his possessing powers which render him susceptible of government leads to nothing. And as the question is very important, so it must not be lightly, or hastily, answered. It cannot be taken as following of necessity, or as matter of course, that, because man is susceptible of being governed, therefore some one is entitled to govern him. Such a right, if it exists, may be shown; it should be shown, and must be shown, or man cannot fairly be required to respect it. If satisfied that he is so made as to be susceptible of rule by persuasion, he is still entitled to ask the question contained in the words of our text, "Who is lord over me?" Until it be evinced that some one possesses a just authority over

him, man is warranted to claim an absolute emancipation. He cannot be called upon to submit his neck to a yoke, until he can be shown the righteousness with which it is imposed upon him. Here is a peopled country susceptible of government, but it does not therefore follow that any one is entitled to occupy it as a sovereign. Here is a platform on which may be erected a throne, but, before you begin to rear the fabric, show with what justice you can lay the foundation.

I enter readily, and desire to enter fairly, into this question; and I lay down to guide the course of my argument three propositions: first, man must have a lord; secondly, no creature can be man's rightful lord; thirdly, man's rightful lord is his Maker.

I. My first proposition is, MAN MUST HAVE A LORD.

To be self-contained and self-sufficient is a high prerogative, which belongs exclusively to God. For him it is a necessity at once of his nature and his happiness, since from eternity he existed alone, and external resource or dependence was impossible; but dependence as necessarily belongs to the creature as self-sufficiency to the Creator. As nature asks an arm to lean upon, so intelligent and emotional beings seek without themselves the objects of their love. And thus it consciously is with man. He is not sufficient to himself, and cannot therefore be contained within himself. He is made to love, and he goes forth out of himself to find the objects of his passion. Like fervid youth, he has a heart to give away. He looks smilingly upon the many objects around him, and may be imagined to address them successively in such terms as these: "Will you love me, and let me love you?" His instinctive cry is, "Who will show me any good; an object fitted to engage my consecration, and to recompense it?" And he cannot be happy till the great gift is made. His nature grows restless in proportion as it becomes fully developed, till its powers are consecrated to some object or other: perhaps to pleasure, in one of its many enticing forms; perhaps to ambition, literary, social, or political; perhaps to wealth, as gratifying the lust of possession, or ministering to the pride of life. And so, at length, his heart is fixed, and he lives, not for himself, but for the object he has chosen. Quite a fiction, consequently, a vain imagination, is the idea that man ever lives to himself. He necessarily lives to another, fondly as he clings to the notion

of liberty, and proud as he is of its fancied possession. The young particularly often triumphantly spurn all bonds, and cry out for freedom; by freedom meaning only exemption from the slender restraints that could be imposed upon them by their fellow-creatures, and not discerning those deeper influences under the power of which they cannot but come.

As this consecration of the heart is the highest tribute we could render to the divine Being, so it may be said that every object to which we render it becomes to us a divinity. It is in the strictest sense our worship, and whatever receives it is our god. Blocks of wood and stone have become the gods of the nations by transfer of homage and dependence, and in a similar manner are the various objects of human pursuit practically deified, although by a more refined and less debasing idolatry. Now it belongs to the conception of God to be, not only an object of consecration, but a possessor of power. To be treated as God is to be made a ruler, to be worshipped is to be obeyed. Accordingly, when, in the spirit of consecration, we have said to any object, "Thou art my god," we at the same moment give it the sovereignty over us, and yield ourselves to its rule. It is so when we assume this attitude towards the living and true God, and it is no less so when we worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator. Thus every object of idolatrous love becomes to us a paramount lord. We at once adore and obey. Since, therefore, man must have an object of love, and since every object of supreme love becomes his ruler, it is evident he must have a lord.

You may test this representation by an appeal to human consciousness and life. Observe, for example, the votary of pleasure. He does not pursue it under the direction of his reason, or with a moderation and wisdom tending to keep it in its proper place, and make it productive of its best results; but he throws off all restraint, and abandons himself to the indulgence of his passions. He is evidently not the master, who makes pleasure subservient to him, but the slave, whom pleasure tyrannically rules. It is the same in every direction, and it must always be so. It is of man's nature to serve; and, if he will not serve God, his Maker, he must still serve every idol which he may put in his Maker's place.

It is true, indeed, that man is at liberty to choose whose yoke he will wear. "Take my yoke upon you," says a

heavenly voice to which it were his wisdom to hearken ; he is not compelled to do so, however, and he may refuse the call. In like manner he may decline any other particular servitude. Earthly solicitations, like the heavenly, are solicitations merely, and each may be separately repelled ; but each will be repelled only that another may prevail. Man has liberty to choose his own master, but he must be a servant still.

The observations I have made bear out, I think, my first proposition, that man must have a lord. Though he can act of himself, he cannot live to himself, but is under a necessity of nature to bind himself in consecration to some object, which he thus constitutes his lord, to be at once worshipped and served.

II. I come, then, to my second proposition : NO CREATURE CAN BE MAN'S RIGHTFUL LORD.

I admit readily that, when man propounds this question, "Who is lord over me?" he is entitled to take a wide and a proud survey. It is not everywhere that his lord is to be found. Not in this lower creation, for example ; for among all the inhabitants of this world he stands supreme. Thus beautifully is his position described by the Psalmist :—

"Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands,
Thou hast put all things under his feet:
All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field ;
The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."

Psalm viii. 5-8.

Here, therefore, man finds only that which, as man, he rules, and no one to rule him. I speak of man now as a race. Resolving the race into its individuals, men aspire in many forms after dominion over their fellows ; but the rule which can thus be established is extremely limited and superficial. It extends merely to external acts, and to a very small portion of these ; it relates only to social purposes, and does not reach to the inner principles of the heart, or affect the great ends of life. Even kings are but subjects of the greater and wider dominion of which we speak, and the loftiest despots may be the meanest slaves. In the sense in which we are speaking, therefore, man may look over the whole of this lower universe, and find none to be his lord.

In like manner, over a far wider space of the creation may he look with an equally proud and independent eye. Among all the ranks of angels, and those hosts of God that stand around his throne and accomplish his will, there is none whom he can be called upon to own as his lord: they also are his fellow-creatures, entitled to no more from him than an equal love, corresponding to his claim from them; his fellow-creatures, dependent, like himself, upon the power that made them, and owing subjection where he also may be found to owe it.

As man finds thus throughout the created universe no being entitled to establish authority over him, so no holy being can be supposed to set up a claim of this kind. Holy angels are, and delight in acknowledging themselves to be, ministering spirits, fulfilling the high pleasure of him whom they obey. But a war in heaven has created an anomaly in this respect. There is a host of rebellious angels who, having aimed at an overthrow of the supreme dominion, and failed of reaching their mark, are outcasts of heaven; and who, for the gratification of a frustrated ambition, and the indulgence of a hopeless malignity towards him who has baffled them, have sought, and to a certain extent have acquired, a dominion over mankind. So Satan is called "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians iv. 4), and "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians ii. 2). This is, alas! no fictitious representation, but is plainly borne out by facts which present themselves on every hand. Respecting this state of things it is proper that I should make a few observations.

I observe, in the first place, that the dominion of Satan is not a dominion of force, but of persuasion. In this respect it is just such as we are speaking of. I do not mean to say anything in mitigation of the malignity of Satan's rule; for, undoubtedly, with the utmost justice is he said to be the great adversary of God and of man. He means us no good; on the contrary, he means us great mischief, thus seeking after the gratification of his malignity, perhaps in the evil he may do to us, but certainly in the evil he may conceive it possible to do to his Maker. Neither do I wish to say anything tending to reduce to a small and insignificant amount the influence which Satan may have over men—I mean over our rational nature; that, doubtless, though not easy to be

defined, is great. But still his dominion is not of the nature of force. He cannot compel any action. He has a power of suggesting thoughts to occupy our minds, and of presenting objects adapted to excite our passions, but no more; so much is comprehended in the idea of temptation, the term by which the Scriptures express his appropriate action, but more would go quite beyond this idea, and require the employment of an entirely different word. The mode in which we are to conceive of it is presented to us, I doubt not in entire fairness, in the description given to us of the temptation of our adorable Lord. "The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew iv. 8, 9). This is just a case of persuasion, an apposite argument leading to an appropriate result. I take this example to be fairly illustrative of the whole of Satan's power over us. In what mode suggestions are made to us by an unembodied spirit it is not for us to know; but those made to our Lord and Saviour as man clearly show that suggestions of the same kind may be made likewise to us; and our own consciousness, perhaps, supplies proof enough of the fact, although the mode may be left in mystery. Such being the kind of influence which our spiritual enemy exercises, it follows that, if he prevails over us, it is by a voluntary act on our part. It is not that he compels us, but that we yield to him. It cannot be a case in which our freedom of action is in any measure restrained, since persuasives only are employed.

I observe, in the second place, that great power is given to the dominion of Satan by the tact and sagacity with which he conducts his processes, and adapts them to the corrupt tendencies, as well as the natural susceptibilities, of the human mind. Undoubtedly, his knowledge of intelligent being in general, and of human nature in particular, is great, and his skill as a tempter beyond comparison. He knows how to conceal himself while he assails, and is capable of transforming himself occasionally into an angel of light. But the principal source of his strength is the congruity of his object with the course of creature idolatry and carnal gratification to which we are already prone. If he approached us with motives to holiness and self-denial, he would, doubt-

less, have very little success. He comes, however, with a very different object. Aiming at a dominion in accordance with our prevailing inclinations, he appeals to us by persuasives drawn from sensual pleasure, from earthly acquisition, and from other things suitable to our depraved nature. By these he persuades, and he influences us with amazing power because man's corrupt heart has an antecedent bias to the motives he employs.

I observe, in the third place, that the dominion of Satan is not founded upon right. It is a dominion to which, though he has acquired it, he has no claim. It is not a legitimate rule, but a usurpation. It is a usurpation in respect of man, to whose homage and obedience he has no title; for he is but our fellow-creature, and has no more right to authority over us than the very worm upon which we tread. It is a usurpation in respect of God likewise, the original and rightful Governor into whose territory this agent of rebellion has come, seizing for himself a region which belonged to another, and making it his own. It is, therefore, a dominion without right, and not so much a government as a captivity.

I observe, fourthly, that, as the dominion of Satan is without right, so it is without power. He presents motives, and does all that by persuasion he can do; but beyond this he cannot go, since he has no means of retribution. If we may suppose him to carry the idea of a government fully out, and to say, "I appeal to you by powerful motives—pleasure, wealth, honour, all are attractive—and according to your conduct I will reward or punish you;" what recompense has he to propose? What heaven can he bestow? Or what hell has he to speak of, save the one kindled for his own perdition? And whom can he carry thither but his companions in rebellion? If any of mankind are sent there, it will not be by the might of his arm, but by a doom originating from another tribunal. He can neither reward nor punish. "Resist the devil," says the Scripture, "and he will flee from you" (James iv. 7). When he finds that he cannot persuade, he owns his defeat, and flees. Submit to him if you choose, for it is altogether a question of your choice; if you choose to repel him you may, without having any consequences to fear.

Having thus presented to you the characteristics of the dominion which Satan has established over man, let me, before I pass on to the next part of my subject, make a solemn

personal appeal. All of us have been, some of us may be at this moment, subject to this adverse power. I might ask you why you should willingly submit to a dominion which has in it neither right nor force. Why should you submit to the rule of a being who is at once a usurper and a coward; who has no claim to what he asks, and no power to resent your denial of it? Can there be an act more unworthy of an intelligent and independent being, or more flagrantly demonstrative of feebleness and folly?

But this dominion is as wretched as it is base; it is not only groundless and powerless, the very sum of misery is in it. You think, perhaps, that, in pursuing the phantoms of pleasure or ambition set before you, you enjoy a delicious liberty, whereas, in truth, you are in a degrading bondage, "led captive by the devil at his will." You are in a condition not allowing of the full and harmonious action of your powers, but binding them, not as with the withes that Samson could break, but as with the charmed bond that he never broke till the day of his death. And what misery is here! Is the service of the devil pleasant? Is the rule of your passions agreeable? Does your pursuit of pleasure involve no sacrifices? Is the body never weary? Is the heart never disgusted? Is the mind never jaded? Is the conscience never uneasy? Is there never upon your lips the verdict of ancient wisdom, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity"? Is the pursuit of gold a luxury? Is not the heart of the miser stung as by a thousand vipers, and harassed by torments of which you would not be the willing subject if the whole world were gold, and were all your own? Or is the pursuit of honour joyous? Vain, glittering, honour! pursued by a thousand men when one only gains it, all the rest being bitterly disappointed, and he, perhaps, most bitterly disappointed of all who wins it, and finds its worth extinguished in his grasp. No; experience testifies that there is no happiness here. The dominion that the wicked one has obtained over you by specious and flattering pretences is not only in him a fraud, but infinitely wretched to yourselves. Why should you bear this? "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Assert your manhood, and at least say, "Who is the devil, that I should serve him? If I have any lord, let it be some more rightful and beneficent sovereign than he." What an infinite mercy it is for you

that One mighty to save has pitied your bondage, and wrought out your deliverance! Harken to him! He saith to the prisoner, Go forth, and to the captive, Be free.

III. I come now to my third proposition: MAN'S RIGHTFUL LORD IS HIS MAKER. And here my remarks are three.

First, this may be inferred from the fact that God claims a government of right. It is in this character he comes forth as our Ruler; and why should it be supposed that he assumes the character without cause? Can any reason be assigned why he should in this respect deceive us? For the lawless dominion which Satan usurps a reason is assignable; none is conceivable why God should usurp dominion. His supremacy extending over all worlds, his rule over us must be comparatively a trifle. There is no reason why he should unjustly grasp it, no consideration for which it is worth his while to act the part of a tyrant, and to tarnish the glory of his righteousness. No; it cannot be. The very fact that God claims a well-founded government over us, and institutes it in the name of equity and truth, may be to us a demonstration that his claim is just.

Secondly, not only may the justice of God's claim be inferred from his making it, but it may be deduced likewise from the actual efficiency of his government. We feel it to be a government, not only of idea, but of fact. It catches hold of our moral powers, and powerfully appeals to all our faculties—to the understanding, the heart, the conscience. Every precept of God brings an authority with it to which the conscience responds. Every proposed recompense of God, whether of reward or of punishment, awakens the profoundest emotions. He thus makes us feel that we are actually governed, and that his rule is not a pretension, but a fact.

It is the first time that we have met with this state of things. Our ears have been greeted by a thousand voices, but the only one which has spoken to the conscience is God's. Our passions have been awakened by a thousand aspects, of gladness on the one hand and of terror on the other, but the only ones which have stirred our souls to their lowest depths are the wrath and the love of God. Here, at length, is one who at least *can* govern us, and can put a bit in our mouths which we may champ in vain. Is not this he whose *right* it is to reign?

It would be hard indeed if it were not so, for the government thus felt by us is one which cannot be avoided. The yoke is laid upon our neck, and no measure of obstinacy or of resistance can shift it from its position. Its adaptation to us is among the deepest secrets of our being, and the securest arrangements of creating wisdom. To be thus under our Maker's government is, under all circumstances, a necessity of our nature, and it would be at once most cruel and most anomalous if such a necessity were otherwise than righteous.

Thirdly, the justice of God's claim may be demonstrated. It rests upon this fact, that God is our Maker. He is the author of our being, and therefore he is entitled to regulate it.

This argument applies to the material universe in all its departments. Of that God is the author; the earth, the sun, the stars, the vapours, the floods—all these he has brought into being, and THEREFORE he has a supremacy over them, and is entitled to rule them. And throughout all these realms he rules without objection. Who complains of God that he has fixed the orbits of the stars? Who complains of God that he determines the course of the wind? Who complains of God that he prescribes the direction of the lightning? None. Here he rules with an unchallenged sceptre. Or, if it is not to be so, how would the objector modify the system? If God is not to rule supreme over the various elements of nature, who is? With whom shall he take counsel, or whom shall he make partner of his throne? Ere he created these things he existed alone, and there was none with whom he could advise; and now, as all that have come into being at his call are at an infinite distance beneath him, and none can be raised to the partnership of a throne so high, the result is that either God rules the universe, or it has no ruler. All those powers of air, and earth, and sky, must go into anarchy unless their Maker govern them.

It is quite true that, in transferring this argument from the physical to the moral world, we encounter a striking change in the nature of the materials to be governed. Beings possessed of rational and voluntary powers are not to be ruled, as the elements of nature are, by force; they are made susceptible of persuasion, and by this influence exclusively they must be swayed. But still it is the author of their being who is entitled to regulate its action; that is, to prescribe the rules which they shall be required to observe, and to

assign the issues to which their conduct shall lead. Man is made to wait for law and recompense; and it can be no assumption on the part of his Maker to lay down the former, and mete out the latter. Or, I again ask, if it is not to be so, how will the objector modify the system? Who can be joined with God in the government of this independent agent? Who has a right to it? With whom could God have consulted as to the manner in which he should make man, the motives to which he should be accessible, and the issue of that system of persuasion which should be exercised over him? There was none, nor is there now any one, worthy of his confidence. Such a government requires a skill infinite and divine, and none but himself possesses it. The case is, therefore, that, if God is not to rule man, he is to have no adequate ruler; his powers of intellect and passion, of conscience and will, are to run wild, not only without direction to good, but at all hazards of endless mischief and boundless sorrow. O let it not be so! Rather than this, it had been better that such a creature had never been devised.

In truth, as to the ground that is thus laid for God's government, no argument approaching to equal strength can be assigned for any other dominion. There is no case like it. A parent is in a subordinate sense the author of the being of his child, and he has, consequently, during childhood, an authority supreme; but this is at once limited and temporary—a beneficent provision for the weakness of the babe, rather than a subjection of the powers of the man. When parental authority ceases, our country takes possession of us; but our country is not the author of our being in any sense, it is but the guardian of our social interests, and on that basis alone it founds a title to our obedience. While the title of the magistrate thus falls short of that of the parent, even that of the parent falls infinitely short of God's. He is not the creator of his child. God is our Creator, in the highest and strictest sense the source of our being, and of all its faculties; and, if he be not entitled to direct the active powers he has produced, no one can be so. If you deny the justice of his claim, I defy you to admit that of any other in the whole universe. It is just beyond all justice, and would remain just if all others were to be abandoned.

Such are the considerations by which, I think, the proposition is fully sustained, that man's rightful lord is his Maker.

Allow me to make, ere I close, a serious application of this important conclusion.

I. As we found in our first Lecture that God's government of man by persuasion is not without a scope, so we now find that it is not without a basis. Man's Maker is his rightful Lord. As he has made man susceptible of being governed by persuasion, he is himself entitled to the government for which he has provided the scope. Here is the foundation of moral obligation. Here is the reason why anything is your duty. Here is the true force of all that is said to you about divine authority. You are under obligation to God, and owe a duty to him, because he is your Maker. It is the author of your being who assumes to rule you, and he is manifestly entitled to what he assumes. He takes nothing that is not his due. Now, by the promptness with which you yield to the influence of all just obligations, by the readiness with which every one of you reveres your father and honours your master, I beseech you to honour and revere your rightful Sovereign, God. Such is the tenour of his appeal to you.

“A son honoureth his father,
And a servant his master:
If then I be a father, where is mine honour?
And if I be a master, where is my fear?
Saith the Lord of hosts.”

Malachi i. 6.

Or will you rather lay yourselves open to the severe and unanswerable reproof—

“Hear, O heavens,
And be astonished, O earth!
For the Lord hath spoken:
I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled against me.”

Isaiah i. 2.

2. The government of God thus rightfully maintained over man meets the entire aspect of his nature. As I said in the beginning, man has a heart to give away, and cannot be content till it is bestowed. Give it to your Maker. That consecration shall be pleasant to you, as, first of all, in harmony with the dictates of your conscience: you shall say, “I have done right; God is entitled to it.” That consecration shall be pleasant to you further, as productive of unspeakable bliss: you shall say, “I have done wisely; for now I shall

be happy." God is the infinitely glorious Being whom alone you can love with all your heart, and not be vexed and wretched in the issue.

3. What a strange and awful thing it is that man should have set himself in opposition to his Maker; and that the government of God, which is undeniably just in all its claims, should be a government against which the whole world has rebelled! We stand in rebellion against HIM! Oh! how sad and fearful it is for a poor worm like man to set himself in opposition to the rule of a being like God, who has at once all right and all power upon his side! That is our position. What infinite presumption is in our conduct! What audacious insult of the eternal throne! What gentleness has been exercised towards us, that we have not been smitten with vengeance ere now; and what mercy infinite, that we have yet a hope of pardon and of peace!

HYMN.

OUR Maker, God! to thee we bow.
Author of life! its Lord art thou:
Beyond all justice is thy claim
Of dutious homage to thy name.

Our varied powers are not our own,
But due in service at thy throne:
Our noblest liberty is still
Entire subjection to thy will.

Based on supremacy divine,
A reign of righteousness is thine:
Thy regal state our souls accord,
Revere thy sceptre, fear thy sword.

Strange! when a worm a rebel stands,
Defiant of thy just commands;
And madly calls thine anger down,
To avenge the insult of thy crown.

LECTURE III.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS ELEMENTS: I, KNOWLEDGE.

“And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”—*Luke* xii. 47, 48.

IN these discourses on God's government of man, I have endeavoured that nothing should be wanting to the satisfaction of a candid inquirer, or to a clear judgment on the important subject before us. I have begun at the beginning, and raised the question in the first instance, whether for a government of persuasion there is a scope; in other words, whether man is a being susceptible of it. I have raised the question in the second place, whether, supposing a scope for such government to exist, there is also a basis for it; that is to say, whether, man being susceptible of it, any one is entitled to assume it. The consideration of these two questions has occupied our preceding Lectures. To the first of them—whether there is a scope for government by persuasion—we have answered that there is, inasmuch as we have found man to be possessed, within certain limits, of a power of independent action, and open, therefore, to persuasive appeals. To the second—whether, man being susceptible of government by persuasion, there is any one entitled to assume it—we have also answered that there is. God, the author of man's being, has the highest title possible to rule him. There is, therefore—so far we are advanced—both a scope and a basis for God's government of man; on the one hand, a being who may fitly be governed by persuasion, and, on the other, one who is entitled to assume the authority. In requiring obedience of man God asks nothing more than his due, and in putting this requirement into a judicial form he assumes nothing more than his right. It is not competent to man rightly to refuse obedience. Hear it, O man! God has a right to govern thee, and thou hast no right to rebel: thou canst not refuse obedience to his commands without a wrong, of which thine own conscience will testify now, and which God will hereafter avenge.

Of what elements, we now further ask, is this divine government to consist? Since God requires obedience of man, and will avenge the refusal of it, it is clear that, if his administration is to be just, it must secure three points: first, his will must be sufficiently known; secondly, adequate motives must be supplied; and, thirdly, equitable recompenses must be attached. If in either of these points there be a defect, it may be pronounced that God's project of government by persuasion is a failure, and cannot issue to his praise. If his will be not sufficiently known, the demand of obedience is absurd; if adequate motives be not supplied, the enforcement of it is unreasonable; and if the recompenses attached be not equitable, the issue of it is dishonourable. Let us, then, proceed to an inquiry into these three points, and see how the case stands as to these necessary elements of a just government by persuasion.

And first, of KNOWLEDGE.

The will of God, I have said, in order to be obeyed, must be known. I may now say that, in order to be obeyed, the will of God must be *made* known. It primarily and exclusively lies within his own bosom, and it is not to be supposed that it is known at all to creatures otherwise than as he shall be pleased to communicate it. The responsibility of this communication rests with God. Man, whom he claims to govern, knows nothing of this matter till his Maker tells him. Our present subject, consequently, is the manner in which God has made known his will to mankind.

Now the case before us is twofold; it is one of fact, and one of principle. We shall have, in the first place, to look at the facts as they exist; and, in the second, to determine the light in which they are to be regarded.

I. Contemplate, then, the facts of the case, or the manner in which God has actually made known his will to man.

If, in the first instance, we look at things as they now are, we see the world in a twofold condition. On one part of it shines the full light of revelation, divine truth being amply made known to us in the Bible; while on another, and a still larger portion, rests a deep gloom of ignorance and darkness. This complex condition, however, it is premature for us to dwell upon at the present moment. It is not the original condition of things; it is the result of many antecedents, some of which require to be studied before we can

arrive at a proper position for the contemplation of the case as it now stands. We must go back, and go back a long way. We must go back beyond Christ, beyond David, beyond Moses, beyond Noah; we must go back all the way to the first parent of our race.

You will say, perhaps, "Well, we cannot go back farther than the garden of Eden." Now I admit that the dispensation which it pleased God to establish in the garden of Eden takes us back to the first man; but I may suggest to you that it does not acquaint us with the first condition of man. You recollect that our first parent was not created there. After the account of his creation of man, we are told that "the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Genesis ii. 8). God first made man. There he was, upon the earth. Then he planted a garden in Eden, and put the man into it. You may say, perhaps, that the time occupied by this process was very short. Undoubtedly, it may have been so; I can say nothing about the duration of it. I am not concerned with that, however; but the order, which is the material thing, was as I have stated. Adam's being put into the garden of Eden was a circumstance which occurred *after* he had been some undefined time in existence on the earth. His condition there, consequently, did not constitute the first state of man. The dispensation which was based on the precept, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis ii. 17), though a very early, and the first recorded dealing of God with man, evidently was not absolutely the first; and we must, for our present purpose, go back even beyond that. There are several reasons for our doing so.

In the first place, some system of administration must evidently have been in bearing upon man before the dispensation of Eden, that is to say, from the very first moment of his existence. If it were but for a few days, a few hours, a few minutes, or a few moments, still there must have been from the very first moment of his existence some method of treatment corresponding with his rational nature. We cannot conceive him to have been for a single instant utterly without law.

In the second place, the dispensation of Eden does not

relate to the entire scope of man's agency. It contains but one command, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." Now that command was not of a moral nature. It may be said, indeed, without disrespect, to have been in itself a trivial command, having rather an accidental importance from its position as the test of a covenant, than any intrinsic weight. Certainly, man's conduct in relation to it had vast consequences; but these resulted from the peculiar arrangements of the dispensation to which it was attached, while the commandment itself left the general scope of human conduct undefined.

Thirdly, the dispensation of Eden does not respect man's position as man, but simply the position of one particular man, Adam; a position which was not normal but accidental, one in which no other man could ever stand, and of which God took advantage to frame upon it a dispensation which never could be acted out by any other individual. It had to do with Adam, not as man, but as the first man. Only because he was such was it possible for him to be made, as God was pleased to make him, a representative man, a federal, or covenant, head of his race, so that the whole should be dealt with according to his conduct, in the way which infinite wisdom had devised. The dispensation of Eden thus having no respect to man as man, but simply to Adam as the first man, supplies no indication of the duty or prospects of mankind at large.

Fourthly, the dispensation of Eden itself requires a basis. If God was entitled so to modify the condition of man as he did by that covenant, it must have been because he was entitled to regulate the condition of man at large. If it was competent to him to issue one precept, prohibiting the eating of a particular fruit, it must have been because he had over man a general claim to obedience; since, if he had not that claim in all things, there was no ground on which he could have it in a particular case. That dispensation itself, therefore, demands a basis for its own standing, and presupposes a larger and more comprehensive system of obligation and precept upon which it may rest—a stem on which itself should be grafted, and of which it should be a ramification.

For the reasons thus stated we must, as I have said, go back beyond the dispensation in Eden, and try to discover what was the very first condition of man with regard to knowledge of the will of God.

Perhaps you will say that such an inquiry must be fruitless, since nothing is recorded in the Scriptures on the subject. That nothing is recorded is true; but, although there is no record, I do not think the matter is obscure. For man in his original nature is still before us, and that which now characterizes him as a rational being evidently did so from the beginning. And God's present treatment of man comprehends the whole scope of his duty and his interest. It contemplates man as man, in the entireness of his relation to God, and in no peculiarity of position. The law as now presented to us in the words of our blessed Lord, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew xxii. 37, 39), is evidently essential rectitude, of universal obligation, and incapable of change. It must have been precisely the same law that laid its bonds upon Adam antecedently to his being placed in the garden of Eden, and subjected to probation there. Had the Son of God spoken to him in answer to the question, "What is the law that I am to obey?" he could not have uttered diviner truth than in the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself."

If you ask whether it is likely that this will of God was communicated to man, I reply that it is in the highest degree probable. It is on all grounds to be expected that God should have made his rational creature at once acquainted with the righteous law of his being. Indeed, the communication of a general rule of moral duty seems necessarily antecedent to the giving of a specific precept, so that it is difficult to see how any shadow of doubt can be supposed to rest upon that question. In the beginning, therefore, Adam knew the will of his Maker. And, although this will was, for him, modified temporarily by the dispensation of Eden, we must conceive that, after the termination of that dispensation, the great primary law would return to its bearing on the human race, in all its simplicity and comprehensiveness.

What has the state of things been since? Alas! too melancholy. The subsequent progress of our race began with a deplorable crime, and within a few years the whole earth was filled with violence. Under these circumstances man's knowledge of the will of God became gradually less and less. By a corrupt heart it was too willingly forgotten,

and both in amount and in vividness it rapidly diminished, until the world sank into the gross darkness in which we now find so large a part of it involved. "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Romans i. 28).

Did the knowledge of the will of God, then, wholly vanish from the world, and were mankind in total darkness? Or, if anything remained as the means by which the world might become acquainted with the will of God, what were its elements and its power? To this question I do not return an absolutely cheerless answer. The night, indeed, was dark, but it was not a night without stars. Our race have never been in absolute ignorance. Four sources of knowledge have always remained to them.

First, there is the pregnant fact of the existence of God. This all men know, because it has been handed down as an historical truth from father to son throughout all generations; and it is known now upon the same authority as that on which it was always known, with the single exception of Adam, to whom God made a personal appearance which is the basis of the truth handed down. With respect to the controversy about the existence of God and its argumentative proofs, I cannot, upon the maturest consideration, but think it wide of the mark; I should characterize it as a controversy which never can be brought to a conclusion, and which never ought to have had a beginning. No man ever has had to prove the existence of God; or has had the question to ask, either of his own consciousness, or of heaven, or of earth, or of any other testimony. It is an element of human knowledge delivered to every man by his ancestors, taught him, believed by him, and responded to by his moral nature, long before he could either attempt to prove it, or to question it. The difficulty to him would be to expel the belief of it from his bosom. The existence of God, then, is a fact, perceived with varying distinctness, no doubt, but universally known. And, the existence of God being known, a certain amount of human duty and obligation is known, as involved in it and deducible from it. He ought to be "glorified as God" (Romans i. 21).

Secondly, there are the works of nature. These, however small the light they may be conceived to supply as compared with that which we enjoy, must be admitted, nevertheless, to

afford some instruction. Call to mind, for example, the words of David in the 19th Psalm:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament showeth his handy-work.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language,
Where their voice is not heard;
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
Their words to the end of the world.”

Psalm xix. 1-4.

The same idea is taken up by the writers of the New Testament, as in the following striking and conclusive passage of the apostle Paul.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the universal impiety and injustice of men;
Who combine the knowledge of the true God with iniquity.
Because what is knowable of God is manifested to them,
For God hath made it manifest to them.
For his invisible attributes,
Since the creation of the world,
Being discerned by the things which are created,
Have been clearly discoverable,
Even his eternal power and godhead.
So that they are inexcusable;
Because, knowing God, not as God did they worship or thank him.”

Romans i. 18-21.—*Hinton's Exposition.*

I am aware (as, indeed, I have just said) that it is not the office of these works of nature to prove the existence of God; but, his existence being known, they illustrate his perfections. They do so to a valuable and important extent, and they speak with a mute eloquence of extraordinary power to every considerate mind. The apostle here declares that by these things the Gentiles “knew God,” or might have known him, and to an extent so considerable that they were “without excuse” because they “glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.” The same argument was employed by the early preachers of the Gospel, as in the following instances: “Nevertheless he [God] left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts xiv. 17). “God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in

temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things" (Acts xvii. 24, 25). And that considerations of this class had really exercised an influence on at least some minds in the pagan world, is manifest from a sentiment which the apostle cites from a Greek author, and sanctions with his own endorsement:—"Certain of your own poets have said, We are also his offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). However dim to us at noon-day these glimmerings of the night may seem, they must have possessed no small brilliancy during the night to which they belonged.

Thirdly, there is the human conscience. This is a light never totally extinguished, a voice never absolutely dumb, a witness never in any degree corrupted. Of it the apostle thus speaks to us:—

"For when nations who have not revealed law instinctively do things prescribed by the law,

They, not having a law, are a law to themselves,

It being manifest that the law is practically written in their hearts.

Their consciences also witnessing, and their reflections alternately condemning and excusing them."

Romans ii. 14, 15.—*Hinton's Exposition.*

It is clear from the connexion that, by the term "law" as used in this passage, the apostle means, not the Jewish law, for the things required by this law the Gentiles did not "by nature" do, but the moral law, or the law of human duty universally, as contained in divine revelation at large. Not possessing the revealed rule of duty, the Gentiles nevertheless, to a certain extent, did "by nature," that is, by inward impulse, the things required by it, being, in their faulty obedience to this impulse as to "a law written in their hearts," continually approved or condemned by their own conscience. And from the fact thus stated the apostle argues that, although the Gentiles were without revelation, they were not wholly without knowledge. This faculty of human nature, the conscience, is more or less developed according to the light that is shed upon it, but it is never wholly extinct.

Fourthly, there is tradition. "Ah!" you say, "poor corrupt tradition; what can we learn from that?" We may, at all events, learn this from it, that there were once in the

world some elements of truth, for of such elements even the most corrupt traditions are, at least to a large extent, the remnants. There must, indeed, have been scattered throughout the whole world such materials of divine knowledge as were possessed before the dispersion of mankind. Noah, besides being the depositary of all the truth communicated to men during the ages before the flood, was himself an inspired teacher, and must be held to have been largely instructed in what it most behoved the race of which he was the second father to know. Now the truth he knew is to this hour somewhere, and in some form, among the pagan nations. It has lost its original simplicity, indeed, and has been used, by men of corrupt imagination, as a material sufficiently plastic for the formation of ecclesiastical myths and the garniture of idol temples; but I need scarcely be afraid to assert that none of it has perished, however it may be disguised. Indeed, when we look at the forms in which the pagan traditions present themselves, how often have thoughtful men been struck with the evident traces of divine truth which are to be found in them. What, for example, are the figures of those idols which you may see in collections from India, but rudely embodied conceptions of some of the divine attributes? One attempts to express superhuman power, another terrific anger, while a third indicates the notion of a divine trinity. You have probably seen the celebrated figure Krishna, which exhibits coiled round its body a serpent with the head under its foot, crushed in the act of biting the victor's heel. Have we not there the first promise molten in expressive brass? It is well known, however, that, not only the Indian, but the classical mythology—I should rather say the mythology of every land—contains a large amount of matter which can be satisfactorily traced to none but scriptural sources.

If you ask, What is the value of these traditions? Are they instructive? I answer, perhaps practically to a very small degree, perhaps not at all; but they might be so. If there were among the heathen considerate minds, they might learn something from these things; or, if the Spirit of God were pleased to make them instrumental, he could, of course, save sinners by them—though I admit that no reason is afforded us to think that he has done so. We know that his chosen instrumentality is the preaching of the Gospel. But, in any

event, these elements of knowledge exist; and they warrant me in saying that absolute darkness is not the state even of the darkest region of the pagan world.

Such appear to be the elements of divine knowledge which are the common heritage of our race. In order to complete our survey of the facts of the case we are contemplating, it remains only to notice the additional phase of it presented by revelation.

Revelation was at first partial and scanty. Its light, such as it was, fell on an individual or a region, but it neither reached the great mass of mankind, nor discovered the truth with clearness. The illumination, so long dim and obscure, was more bright in the services of the Hebrew ritual, and in the words which fell from the lips of the Jewish prophets; and it was brightest of all when the Sun of Righteousness arose, and the Great Teacher sent from God, having first in person made known his Father's will, left his apostles to expound the mystery of his sacrifice, and to testify "with open face" the Gospel of the grace of God. We thus enjoy the full light of day. We may now know everything which it concerns our salvation that we should know, and we have in this respect nothing to desire. The light of revelation, however, is still only partially diffused. Privileged as some portions of the world are, others—many others, alas!—are yet in the depths of pagan darkness. Many ages have passed away, and the precept which so strikingly marks the universality of Christianity at once in its adaptation and its destiny—"Preach the Gospel to every creature"—is yet unfulfilled, even to the majority of mankind.

II. Such are the facts of the case which is before us, exhibiting the manner in which the knowledge of divine things has been actually communicated to mankind. Let us now, in the second place, inquire in what light these facts are to be regarded.

I observe, generally, that the scene before us is one. It exhibits, indeed, aspects of great diversity; from the brilliant beam which cheered the earliest portion of our first parents' existence, to the universal darkness of the pagan world, and the chequered lights and shades of Gospel times. These are not separate systems, however, but parts of a common system; and all combine to constitute God's grand scheme of making known his will to mankind.

Is it, however, a satisfactory one? And can it be regarded as an adequate and equitable basis for a universal government of persuasion? We should have expected, perhaps, to find the will of God clearly and amply made known to all whom he expected to obey him. Could we have thought that, with his large requirements of obedience and vast apparatus of retribution, he would have allowed the human race to sink into so dark a condition as that into which it has actually fallen, or deal with its various portions in modes of such startling inequality?

The questions thus arising are two: the first being whether, amidst so much darkness, a fair appeal has been made to the moral powers of mankind; and the second, whether, amidst such unequal means of knowledge, ground can be laid for an equitable retribution. On these two questions, neither of which, indeed, is without its difficulties, I shall reverently say a few words.

In the first place, if we ask whether, amidst so much darkness, a fair appeal has been made to the moral powers of mankind, we must answer at once, Of course there has, since God has conducted it. We would rather rest the matter finally here, if it were necessary, and upon an absolute reliance on the holiness and benignity of his ways, than allow even a momentary shadow to fall upon his glory. To this general expression of confidence, however, it may be added, that the testimony of Holy Scripture is invariably on our side. The sacred writers have had to do with idolatries and vices of all kinds throughout all ages, and none of them, either in the New Testament or in the Old, ever makes an apology or suggests an excuse for them. The apostle Paul expressly declares that those concerning whom he wrote (and they were some of the vilest the world ever knew) were "without excuse" (Romans i. 20).

In a general view, indeed, it is plain that things must have been so. Either the smallest amount of privilege ever possessed by mankind did afford means of divine knowledge, or it did not: if it did not, the whole fabric of our discourse is overthrown; if it did, then it made, so far as it went, a true and proper appeal to the moral powers. It was not necessarily ineffectual because it was comparatively feeble, for, if it had been so, a similar inefficiency must attach to the larger means of knowledge as well as the smaller, since

between these no line of demarcation is either indicated or possible. Light is one, whether it glimmer in the stars which cheer the night, or blaze in the monarch of the noon-tide sky; and upon no principle could an illuminating power be denied to the former, by which that of the latter might not also be impugned. In fact both are useful—the north-star as truly as the sun. And if we should be reminded that by the more scanty elements of instruction no one ever did find his way to God, we have only to recollect that the same may be said of the Gospel itself, except in so far as it is made effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is, in truth, only on the supposition that an effective appeal to the moral powers had been made, that culpability is assignable to the vices and idolatries of men; yet this is assumed everywhere in God's dealings with them, and nowhere more pointedly than in the fullest revelation of his mercy.

In the second place, if we ask whether, amidst such unequal means of knowledge, ground can be laid for an equitable retribution, a difficulty presents itself more apparent than real.

The only cause of it is the assumption of a uniform retribution. It is taken for granted that all persons who have been disobedient to God, under whatever measure of light, are to incur the same condemnation. There is, according to some, a certain hell into which all sinners are to be thrown, alike those who have known little and those who have known much. The retribution being one, there is clearly no scope for diversity of punishment. If, however, we reject this idea, and conceive retribution to consist of some element variable according to the measure of men's knowledge, the difficulty disappears; because, if retribution may vary, it is plain that knowledge also may vary and yet guilt be equitably treated.

On this subject the testimony of Scripture is clear. The apostle thus speaks: "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Romans ii. 12). By the term "law" in this passage Paul evidently intends the revealed will of God; and when he speaks of those who have sinned "without law," that is, without the light of revelation, perishing "without law," the meaning is that the

penalties assigned by revelation to those who have sinned under its light shall not be inflicted on those who have not enjoyed it. They will suffer, indeed, for they have sinned; but they shall not suffer the punishment of those who have had the benefit of greater illumination.

On this subject our text also is altogether decisive. "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." It might appear from this passage that "things worthy of stripes" might be committed by a servant who "knew not" his lord's will; but this phrase is undoubtedly to be taken, not of an absolute, but of a comparative ignorance, or of less full and complete knowledge. The whole is to be understood, indeed, not so much of knowledge actually possessed, as of means of knowledge enjoyed. These, when God gives them, he justly expects us to improve, so that we cannot shelter ourselves under a voluntary ignorance; but he does not hold us answerable for anything beyond a due improvement of the means of knowledge he affords. Thus is brought out a principle the equity of which is unquestionably established in human affairs; and this is to be applied, upon Christ's own authority, in all its breadth and bearing, to the government of God.

We are now in a position from which we may take a more satisfactory view of the scene around us.

Christians have often been taunted by infidels with the bearing of the evangelical system on the good and the wise of ancient paganism. "Then you mean," say they, "to send Homer, Aristotle, Plato, and all the great men of antiquity to hell?" Our answer is, No. Plato, Aristotle, Homer, and all other men, will be judged equitably according to their works. If their light was small, their responsibility also was small; if their light was none, their responsibility was none; and the responsibility thus absolutely varying with, and being exactly proportionate to, the light enjoyed, there cannot be an act of injustice done to any man. In this view common sense is not against God's government, but on its side.

The general principle thus established applies, not only to the case of the pagan nations, but also to all cases of

diversity of knowledge; to the different periods of human life—to children who can know little, and to grown persons who may know much; to the different conditions of human life—to idiots, or partial idiots, in whom the means of knowledge are reduced or annihilated by physical causes. Responsibility vanishes where the means of knowledge vanish; and, this rule being universal and without exception, God's administration in this respect must be of unblemished justice.

In the conclusion of this subject allow me to say, that it is of immense importance for us to put to a practical use the general principle which has been laid down. We see how responsibility is measured. Its rule is our means of knowledge. Now, dear hearer, for this question,—What is your responsibility? If you had been a pagan, and had lived where you had nothing to tell you what God is but the sun and the stars, or where your only knowledge of redemption had been drawn from sculptured emblems, you would have had some degree of responsibility; you might have known something of God, and according to what you might have known you should have glorified him. But you have lived in the brightest light which God has ever shed upon this world. Here, with the Bible in your hands, all that God is to you, all that you owe to him, and all that you are to expect from him, is told you. Your sin, your duty, your danger, your hope—all is made plain. The day has dawned upon you, and the night is past. The sun has climbed to his meridian altitude, and never can shine more brightly upon this dark world, or on man's benighted eye, than it now shines on yours. Your responsibility, therefore, is proportionately heavy. You enjoy the very utmost that man can have to answer for. Now what are you doing? Are you improving your opportunities? Are you endeavouring to know what you may know of God? Are you a candid and humble student of your Bible? Are you asking what is your duty, and to the utmost of your knowledge doing it? Or are you treating the holy Oracles with cavil or neglect? Are you listening to the rebellious voice within that saith, "Who is the Lord that I should serve him?" Are you trampling upon God's authority, setting at defiance his commandments, running the risk of his wrath? In the midst of all this light, are you pursuing a course which, never in the

whole of this world's history has been, and never till it shall come to an end can be, more solemnly rebuked than it is now?

We often speak of our ample means of knowledge, and our abundant opportunities, as though they were a privilege. Yes, verily, and a privilege they are, if we will make use of them; but, if not, a sad calamity. Oh! if you have lived amidst the means of knowledge only to neglect them, it had been better for you to have been born a pagan of any age, or of any land. You might have despised the means of knowledge still, but they would have been means of knowledge less bright, and therefore less condemning, and there would have been found a retribution for you at last less terrible than that which awaits you now. But now, sinning amidst all light and against all persuasion, what can await you but the most fearful of all recompenses? O trifle not! Listen to the solemn things which Christ said of the cities where his mighty works had been wrought, and they repented not. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matthew xi. 21-24). What would that same compassionate heart and solemn voice have said had he lived in our day? "O England! O London! O Gospel hearers! O proud of the name of Christianity! It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Bethsaida and Capernaum, in the day of judgment, than for you." It must be so. There is no exaggeration here. Sin committed, like yours, amidst ample means of instruction, where God's glory and grace are alike presented to you, and time and eternity, and heaven and hell, and love and hope, all make their appeals to you, shows a deliberateness of iniquity, a hardness of heart, and a cherished obstinacy, which make us tremble for your future. Do you really mean to kindle for yourselves such a hell as that which awaits you if you persist in your present course?

Do you mean, out of the very abundance of the privileges which God has given you, to construct for yourselves a doom the most conspicuous among all the lost, and to render yourselves a gazing-stock for your rashness through all eternity?

It is an infinite mercy that judgment is not even now pronounced; an infinite mercy that your sin may be yet forgiven; an infinite mercy that I may speak, ere I sit down, of the fountain which is filled with Jesus' blood. Ay, blood it needs to wash out such stains as these! But even your offended Maker says, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i. 18).

HYMN.

NOT without a guiding light
Is the nations' darkest night:
Nature tells of Him they know,
Law is writ within them too.

But proportionate shall be
Their responsibility:
Less is asked by equal Heaven,
Where there is but little given.

'Tis where knowledge full and bright
Sheds its glories on the sight,
That transgressors justly come
Under aggravated doom.

Fearful doom, alas! is mine,
If pursued by wrath divine.
Stay thy hand, offended God!
For the sake of Jesus' blood.

LECTURE IV.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS ELEMENTS: 2, MOTIVE.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways."—*Haggai* i. 7.

HAVING in the preceding discourses ascertained the scope and the basis of God's government of man, I entered last Lord's day evening on the consideration of the elements of

which it must consist. I observed that to every government by persuasion there must belong three principal elements—knowledge, motive, and retribution; the first supplies the directing light, the second the persuasive power, and the last the merited reward. Our Lecture last Lord's day was devoted to the first of these topics, or the manner in which God has made known his will to mankind; we proceed this evening to the second, or the motives by which he solicits obedience.

Our subject presents itself to us in two aspects; the one theoretical, and the other practical. In the first place, we shall have to take up a government by persuasion under its general conception, and to consider what is the quality of the motives fitted to it; and, in the second, to consider God's government of man in its actual form, and observe in what manner the motives which he applies fulfil the necessary conditions.

I. In the first place, we have to take up a government by persuasion under its general conception, and to ascertain the quality of the motives fitted to it.

Now, generally speaking, the quality of the motives that should be employed in a system of government by persuasion may be expressed in one word, adaptation; or, more fully, adaptation to the faculties of the being who is to be governed. And they should possess such adaptation in two respects: first, in their nature; secondly, in their force.

The motives to be employed in a system of government by persuasion should be adapted to the being to be governed, first, in their nature. Having man with his various faculties in view, we may lay down the following rules.

1. Motives should be adapted to the *mind*. It is only through the intellect that our feelings can be approached. Whatever is to operate persuasively must first be understood. All motives, consequently, or appeals intended to be such, should be readily comprehensible in their full meaning. They should not be involved in obscurity, or difficult of apprehension; but plain, clear, and easy to be understood. At the same time they should satisfy the mind, and meet its natural conceptions of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Considerations could not be persuasive if they were unintelligible on the one hand, or out of harmony with our natural sentiments on the other.

2. Motives should be adapted to the *heart*. It is for the sake of reaching the heart, the seat of feeling, that persuasive considerations are addressed to us, and it is by awakening the feelings that they are to gain their end. All motives, consequently, should be fitted to kindle desire or aversion, to act upon the hopes and the fears, and to arouse the varied susceptibilities of our emotional nature. They should not be derived from things either indifferent or trivial, but from things naturally interesting to us, so that every passion in its turn may be appealed to, and the heart be stirred to its profoundest depths.

3. Motives should be adapted to the *conscience*. It is to this faculty that the sphere of subjective rectitude is committed. It is our moral sense, and all questions of right and wrong are authoritatively decided by it. All motives, consequently, should conform themselves to its dictates, since against them none ought to prevail. The exhibition of right and wrong from without should always correspond with the sense of right and wrong which is within the bosom.

4. Motives should be adapted to the *governing power*; that is to say, to the power of voluntary thought, by which the entire machinery of action in man's breast is subjected to his personal control. The engagement of this faculty is not always, indeed, necessary to persuasion, inasmuch as some of the appeals made to our feelings take instant effect, and neither require thought on the one hand, nor permit it on the other; but in all the more important cases motives operate only through reflection. It is not in a moment that their force appears, or that their weight is felt; or it may be that through various forms of opposition their final prevalence is to be achieved. All motives of this class, consequently, should have about them something fitted to awaken and engage to action our power of voluntary thought, something of obvious interest and importance, which shall forbid their being trifled with, or lightly dismissed. It is thus only that unwelcome considerations especially can have any opportunity of exercising a due share of influence on our determinations.

Motives should be adapted to the being to be governed, secondly, in their force. For as motives may be in themselves of different weight, or may be more or less forcibly presented, so the susceptibilities of those to whom they

appeal may be of indefinite variety. According to the several ranks of created natures, one may require, or may be able to bear, motives of greater power than another, or a more vivid exhibition of them. All motives, consequently, should, in this point also, be adapted to the faculties of those to whom they are addressed. In this respect there are two extremes to be avoided; the motives employed in a system of government by persuasion should be neither too strong, nor too weak.

On the one hand the motives should not be too strong. It is easy to conceive that they may be so, either in themselves or in the manner in which they are presented to us. Motives may be too strong in themselves. Capital punishment, for example, would be an extreme persuasive if applied to the recommendation of the duties of life, or even to the repression of its minor vices. The case amounts to what may be called a moral compulsion; not an actual, or physical, compulsion, but such an overstress of motive in one direction as shuts out consideration, and interferes with freedom of choice. In cases in which motives are thus disproportionate they fail of their true object, a free choice being the result properly aimed at in a system of persuasion, and not consent, as it were, against choice.

I may now give an example of a motive, if not in itself too strong, at least too forcibly presented. With a general and vague apprehension of being arrested and punished dishonest persons will still commit robbery, but no man will commit a theft under the actual observation of the police. Reduce the motive to a probability, and his dishonest propensities will prevail, but immediate certainty brings the penalty too close. There is a sort of compelled honesty, even in the thief, while the eye of the officer watches him. In this case motive is brought into a too forcible operation, and scope is not allowed for the real play of the passions on either hand. Motives should be such, and so presented, that they may be either yielded to or refused. If they cannot be refused, there is not accomplished any process of persuasive treatment at all; it is a system of moral compulsion by motive in excess.

As motives should not be too strong, however, so neither should they be too weak. They should be neither so weak in themselves as not to present a sufficient inducement, nor

so feebly exhibited as not to awaken the feelings, and take an effective part in the inward struggle. This principle is fully acknowledged when inducements are held out to the brave and the adventurous to undertake services of extreme peril, as the preservation of property or life from shipwreck. In such cases the natural sense of self-preservation is contended against by the love of gain, and the greater the hazard the larger must be the offered reward. To propose a trivial recompense would, of course, be to solicit the service in vain. The same principle is kept in view also in the arrangements of human law, in which it is well known that insufficient penalties avail less than nothing to the repression of crime.

And, as motives should not be too feeble in themselves, so neither should they be too feebly presented. Their force is very much diminished when any, and especially when an extreme degree of uncertainty attaches to them, or when their realization in fact is thrown far into the distance, so that more immediate interests overbear them.

In laying down the rule that, in every system of persuasion, motives should be adapted, both in their nature and their force, to the faculties of the being to whom they are addressed, I assume that the object in view is to prevail by reason; for which purpose the motives exhibited should be so balanced as to be sufficient, but not more than sufficient.

II. I have thus briefly treated the theoretical part of our subject, and shown the quality of the motives fitly to be employed in a system of government by persuasion. I come now to the practical part of it, and proceed to inquire whether, and how far, the motives employed in God's government of man fulfil these conditions.

In the outset of this inquiry, let us briefly ask what those motives are by which God appeals to us. The answer to this question is threefold.

God appeals, first, to our *sense of duty*. Such is the idea which pervades the two great commandments, as given by our Lord: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37, 39). Here the requirement is based upon the relation that God bears to us, and we to him. He is "the Lord our God," and we are the creatures of his hand. Our sense of right is thus appealed to; it being right beyond all question that God, the

author of our being, should receive from us a willing and entire submission.

God appeals, secondly, to our *sense of gratitude*. He "loadeth us daily with benefits" (Psalm lxviii. 19). He "gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 17). A kind, universal, and perpetual, providence appeals to us for thankfulness to him, as the author and giver of every good and perfect gift. And his love in redemption pleads with us still more powerfully than his benignity in providence; "for God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). And thus "he appears in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses" (2 Corinthians v. 19). In all this he seems but to say, "Love me, for, behold, I have loved you."

God appeals, thirdly, to our *sense of interest*. His principle is recompense. He assures us that our well-being shall be promoted by obedience, and he announces punishment for disobedience in every form. According to the words of the apostle, when speaking of the great day of account and retribution, God "will render to every man according to his works: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (Romans ii. 6-8). Here are exhibited elements of retribution, both happy and miserable—recompenses for good and recompenses for evil—into the nature of which I shall have more particularly to enter hereafter; in the meantime no doubt can exist of their unspeakable importance.

Thus directly God addresses our sense of duty, of gratitude, and of interest; and within this classification, more or less strictly, all the appeals which he makes to us may be arranged. Let us now take up the question whether the motives which he employs are adapted to the faculties of man.

First, are they adapted to man in their nature? Are they of a kind which he naturally deems worthy of his regard, finds it easy to understand, and is prompt to feel? Undoubtedly they are. The sense of right, the sense of grati-

tude, the sense of interest, are the main impulses of human action in every department of life. Man understands nothing more readily than what relates to his interest ; his heart has no quicker sensibility than that called forth by gratitude ; the testimony of his conscience is never wanting in favour of that which is right. All divinely-employed motives, therefore, are of a class plain to man's understanding, and going directly to his conscience and his heart. Whatever mystery may attach to speculative topics, there is no mystery here ; but the government of God is just an appeal to man's common sense, and to the universal sentiments of desire and aversion, of hope and fear. In this respect there is in it nothing extraordinary. It is substantially the very process under which we are made continually to live. It is a perpetual and current appeal to our sense of duty, gratitude, and interest. There is about it, therefore, no novelty, no strangeness, no difficulty ; it is adapted to man, and naturally calls forth his voluntary and active powers.

Secondly, are these motives adapted to man in their force?

On the one hand, are they too strong ? It is obvious to remark that they might well be thought so, when we advert to the sources from whence they are derived. When we consider that the voice which addresses our sense of right comes from God, our Maker ; that the bounties to which he appeals are from his immediate hand, and at once so multitudinous and so constant ; and that the recompenses which he has to render are at once so glorious and so terrible ; when we consider these things, it might not unnaturally seem that motives like these would transcend our powers. In their very nature they seem too vast ; or rather, it raises to an immeasurable dignity the nature of man that he is capable, however imperfectly, of feeling the influence of them.

If not overwhelming in themselves, however, these motives might easily have been too forcibly presented. Just as none will commit crime under the eye of the magistrate, so neither could any man feel free to choose sin, if placed either at the gate of heaven or on the brink of hell. The presence of God made immediately conscious to us, or the direct perception of the awful realities of future retribution, would embarrass our freedom of choice, and produce a kind of moral compulsion. But it is the heart's true choice that is

to be arrived at ; and therefore these motives, awfully great in their nature, are presented to us in a mitigated form. He in whose presence we are to act, who searches and knows all hearts, how very little we perceive of him ! How is he withdrawn entirely from the mortal eye ! How have we, if we see him by the mind's eye, to realize his presence by thought so as not to overbear us, but to supply at once materials for reflection and stimulus to free action. We may forget God if we please. Great as the fact of his presence is, it is submitted to our option to render it either impressive or nugatory. And so with respect to eternal things at large. They are removed from us, perhaps not very far, but beyond the boundary of the grave, just into another world. Our mortal vision is screened from them, and not much of their intensity is manifested to us. Eye hath not seen them, ear hath not heard them, neither have they entered into the imagination of man. We cannot learn the secret, either from the heaven above or from the deep beneath. But something is told us ; not enough to embarrass our freedom, but enough to deserve our consideration ; not enough to constrain our consent, but enough to solicit our choice, and, if duly pondered, to prevail.

It might be thought that the great motives thus presented to us by God would not admit of refusal ; but that they do so is manifest from this, that they are in fact refused. Vast and glorious as these motives are, men do resist them, and live in thoughtlessness of God, in disobedience to his will, and in neglect of an eternal world. Altogether marvellous is this when we come to see how great these things are, but, nevertheless, with the fact before our eyes we cannot doubt it. And these motives, therefore, are clearly not presented with an overbearing force, or an excessive splendour. They are exhibited in a form and manner so mitigated as to allow of human choice, and, while soliciting consent, to permit refusal.

Divinely-employed motives, then, are not too strong. Let us now look at them from the opposite point, and ask, Are they too weak ? This, assuredly, in their own nature they cannot be, since they are incomparably the most glorious of all that are presented to mankind ; and, although exhibited with a tempered majesty, they are capable of being realized intellectually with a commanding vividness. It might seem,

indeed, that, if they were sufficient to command man's heart, they ought, at least in some instances, to prevail; whereas, alas! they are, not only extensively, but universally, repelled. Must they not be too feeble? I would admit this conclusion, if no other cause were to be assigned for the fact. Another cause, however, presents itself, and a sufficient one. Man will not reflect upon the motives which God presents to him. Now it is of the nature of man's power of voluntary thought practically to modify, to any extent, the motives by which he is addressed. By this process even trivial motives may become great, and acquire over our minds a dominant influence. To take an example. A man may reflect upon an injury till he maddens himself to revenge, and will shed blood; not because the injury is particularly great, or because arguments are wanting to soothe his irritation, but because he has so exclusively dwelt upon the wrong that he has given it an unnatural and disproportionate power over his feelings. In like manner, the greatest motives may have their power reduced by want of reflection. If there be grand motives and you will not think on them, they are not grand to you. Say that a large amount of wealth is placed before you, to be securely attained by a moderate amount of exertion: if your attention be fixed on that offer and its advantages, it will naturally stimulate you to action; but, if you let it pass from your thoughts and sink into forgetfulness, the motive, though great in itself and vividly presented to you, will be practically powerless. The same observation may be applied to other motives; by thoughtlessness every one of them can be reduced to the smallest quantity, and even practically annihilated. No motive is to any man more than he pleases to make it. And the principle thus laid down avails to account for the neglect of the great motives presented by God to man. It is true, indeed, that God, in his universal presence and providence, in his righteous claims and his redeeming grace, in his present authority and his future judgment, appeals to man's heart in vain; but how should it be otherwise when God is not in all his thoughts? Considerations of this class, glorious as they are, are, after all, but motives, and they constitute no exception to the laws by which the prevalence of motives is regulated. If man will think of these things, they will affect him; if he will not, even these have no power. It is not that these motives are

weak, but that he is mightier than all motives, and consequently mightier than these.

If the question be asked, Would those motives which God presents to men prevail *if considered*? I answer, without a moment's hesitation, they would. And I will give three reasons why I hold this belief.

The first is drawn from these motives themselves. They are by far the most weighty presented in any direction to the mind of man. Put them into comparison with others. Think of the sense of duty, of gratitude, of interest, as they are appealed to in a thousand forms in worldly affairs: the forcibleness of these appeals is not to be denied; but, when you contemplate the manner in which God addresses the same sentiments, they sink into comparative powerlessness. How vastly duty to God surpasses all other obligations! Favours received from God, how supreme is the claim they establish to our gratitude! And how infinitely the spiritual and eternal elements of our well-being transcend the carnal and the temporal! Earth and time shrink into nothing as compared with God and eternity. Now, if these divinely-presented motives be in their own nature unspeakably greater and more weighty than those of ordinary life, I can scarcely be wrong in saying that, if they are duly considered, they will certainly prevail. How should it be otherwise? If the lesser motives prevail when considered, why not the greater also? It is in the nature of things that, if the entire mass of motives which appeal to man be duly considered, those of the greatest weight and importance will always prevail.

It is a necessary corollary from the goodness of God, that he must be deemed to have put man into a state the entire aspect of which is fitted to make him wise and happy: and from this it follows that, if we will give due consideration to all the motives presented to us, we shall be sure to choose the wisest and the best. If we go wrong, it will be because we give undue consideration to one thing, or neglect the due consideration of another. Such a balance in the influences with which God has surrounded man, such a relation to one another of the things amidst which God has placed him, it is quite necessary to conceive. A system under which man might have given due consideration to every topic presented to him and yet err, is simply incredible. Assuredly, God has so ordered his ways that, all things being duly considered,

the wisest, the happiest, and the best, should be adopted. And it will thence follow, that the appeals which God makes to our sense of duty, of gratitude, and of interest, since these constitute the weightiest of all motives presented to us, will, if we give due consideration to all, be the motives finally prevalent with us. If it be not so, how can a contrary issue be explained?

I take a second reason for this opinion from the facts of human experience. I believe that divinely-presented motives, whenever they may be duly considered, will prevail, because whenever they are considered they do prevail. I challenge the production of a single instance out of the whole mass of human experience to the contrary of this assertion. Such motives do not always prevail to obedience, but they always prevail to the extent to which they are considered. You find among men a great variety of mental exercises in relation to religion. Their duty to God, their sin against him, their danger, their salvation, and the cognate topics, affect men's minds in different degrees. Some are slightly affected, some are affected much more, and some intensely. What is the reason of such diversities? Religious topics do not affect any man's mind unless he thinks on them. In the case of the man who reflects on them occasionally, occasional thoughts give rise to occasional anxieties. The man who thinks on them more frequently and more seriously feels them more deeply; and in proportion to our intensity of thought is the depth of our emotions. The man who enters fully upon the consideration which God's appeal to his sense of duty, of gratitude, and of interest, deserves, is inevitably weaned from the paths of sin. "I thought on my ways," said the Psalmist, "and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" (Psalm cxix. 59). There never was such a thing in this world, for example, as a man gazing upon the cross of Christ, and realizing the love of God as manifested therein, and yet resisting its influence. In truth, wicked men are very cowards. They dare not think. And their cowardice yields a testimony to the truth I am now maintaining. It is for fear their hearts should be won from sin and reconciled to God, that they are obliged to cherish habitual thoughtlessness of religion. Why else is it that an ungodly man dreads to think? Why else is it that, although you may persuade him to perform religious ceremonies, and even in a formal manner to pray, you cannot induce him to

reflect with any earnestness on the great things of God? It is because he has an inward consciousness that earnest thought would effect a change in him. When we urge serious reflection upon ungodly men, they often reply that they cannot reflect because it makes them miserable. Why, in so far as even a slight meditation on divine things renders them miserable, this is a direct testimony to their power. Of course, further meditation would awaken the feelings still more deeply, and in the end reflection would do all its work. It is evident, therefore, that wicked men have no chance of defying the motives by which God appeals to them, but by shutting them out of their hearts.

My third reason for the belief I maintain is drawn from the attitude which God takes in relation to this matter. By instituting a government of persuasion, he throws himself upon the sufficiency of the motives he employs. It lay with him to arrange all the elements fitted to act upon the heart of man in such a manner that the greater weight of motive should always be on the side of happiness and right, and that the balance should never be in favour of misery and wrong. He has undoubtedly effected this adjustment with infinite care, and with perfect wisdom, and he relies upon it with confidence. He now does nothing but persuade. He presents motives, and, asking consideration, leaves them to produce their natural results. All the precepts which he has given may be regarded as resolving themselves into this, "Consider your ways:" as though he said, "I am sure that whatever you do considerately will be right, and therefore I ask no more." The attitude thus assumed by God is not only significant, it is decisive of the question before us. It would be absurd for him to leave motives to their operation, unless their efficacy on reflection were made secure.

I may be asked here, perhaps, whether, even if my position were admitted respecting man in his uprightness, the same thing can be maintained respecting man in his fallen and corrupt condition? I answer, that it is to be maintained respecting man in his fall and corruption as strictly as in his uprightness, since it is involved in his rational nature. A man upon whom motives, when considered, do not operate according to their weight, is not of sound mind. One of the characteristic elements of insanity is in him, and he is unfit for ordinary life. Neither in trade, in domestic service, nor in

any other way, can business be transacted with him. He is fit only for an asylum. Now, whatever the fall has done with us, it has not turned us into madmen. We still, at any rate, possess our rational powers, and consequently still, upon consideration, act under the influence of motives according to their weight. The fall has made us disinclined to serve God—that is to say, disinclined to consider the motives which would lead us to do so; but this disinclination to consider leaves untouched the sufficiency of the motives to persuade, and their power, if considered, to prevail.

If I am further asked, what, then, if this is the case, is that inability which theologians ascribe to man? I answer, it is merely disinclination—simply so, and no more—though called inability. I hold the use of the term inability in this connexion to be both infelicitous and inappropriate; since, being employed to denote a state of pure unwillingness, it is used, not only out of its proper meaning, but so as to create a false impression. So conscious are the parties who use it of this impropriety, that they qualify the term, and speak of *moral* inability—that is, inability as consisting in the will; but inability does not consist in the will at all, and it is at once an entire misuse, and an injurious perversion, of language to speak as if it did.

Let us now return, however, from the brief digression into which our argument has led us. Seeing that the motives by which God appeals to us are so framed that they are sure to prevail if considered, it only remains to ask whether they are also adapted to engage consideration. Here it is enough to ask, What motives can be so, if these are not? God's authority over us and our obligation to him, his innumerable bounties and the eternal recompenses to come, are surely subjects worthy of regard. No one can give them even a glance, without being immediately constrained to say, "These are truly important themes, and deserve to be deeply pondered." A voluntary neglect of them cannot but be a source of self-reproach.

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear that God's government of man fulfils, with respect to its motives, the conditions necessary to a just government by persuasion. They are adapted to man, both in their nature and in their force. They are of a kind which he most promptly feels; while they are neither so strong as to overbear his freedom,

nor so weak as, if duly considered, not to prevail. The system, in this respect, satisfies all the conditions which a sound reason can require. Our Maker herein does us no wrong. He has given us a power of voluntary thought, he is entitled to call upon us to use it, and this is all that he requires. The whole preceptive import of his government is here: "Use your faculty of reflection, have your eyes open, your ears quick, and your senses about you; look attentively, judge carefully, ponder everything according to its ascertainable value, and you will decide aright." It is impossible to conceive of a system of government by persuasion reduced to a simpler or a more unobjectionable law than this. Blot out all God's specific commandments, and let there be no precept in the Bible but this, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." Look about you; to God who made you, to God who has so richly blessed you, to God who sent his Son to save you, to God who will make retribution both of good and of evil. Compare these things with all other things, and God is as sure of your heart as it is sure that you have a heart to give. Such a system of government by persuasion is emphatically a system of absolute reason and common sense.

Our subject, in conclusion, will teach us some important lessons.

First, let us learn what our sin is. Our sin is essentially inconsideration. Guilt may be transferred from all things that are specifically wrong to this one point. We have been inconsiderate. We have not been mindful of him who made us, and who has our eternal interests in his hands. This is the essential character of our wrong-doing. It is our sin. God, who gave us the power of voluntary thought, requires the use of it, and it is all he does require. It is but little, and it cannot justly be denied to him; but we have denied it to him. We have voluntarily given our attention to comparative vanities, and refused to ponder the things of God. From this root-sin spring all the evils and follies of our lives.

Secondly, let us learn the mode of performing the will of God. In this respect a great mistake is almost universally prevalent. We attempt to do right by direct effort, rather than by what may seem to us the circuitous mode of reflection. Of course, we fail. But our way to do the will of God is to consider the motives by which he appeals to us.

You are to love God; but you find your heart averse to him, and you say, "I cannot." You have not really tried. The way for you to love God is to set his character before you, and to meditate upon it as it is set forth in the Bible; a process by which you will infallibly come to revere its majesty, and bow before its glory. Survey the innumerable mercies that he is bestowing upon you, from morning to night and from year to year, and, before you have meditated upon them for one hour, your heart will swell with thankfulness. Dwell upon the love that he has shown you in the gift of his beloved Son, and you will not spend a lengthened period at the cross before you will be led to say, with wonder and with shame, "Could I ever have been such a rebel?" The way for you to realize things eternal is not, in a customary way, to read the Bible or to hear the Gospel, but it is to betake yourself to serious and earnest reflection on their nature and importance. THINK; and measure time against eternity, your body against your soul, the earthly against the heavenly. Your heart, with all its obstinacy, will inevitably yield if you think; and the reason why it has always gone the wrong way is that you have hitherto given your thoughtfulness to the world. It is thought that sways you to sin; apply it in a contrary direction, and it will lead you to God. I know that this counsel is unpalatable. You would rather do anything of a religious kind than think, because other things disturb you less in your sins, and do not threaten such effectual interference with your worldly courses. But what a confession is this of your determination to cleave to the world, and, under the cover of religious forms, to shelter yourselves from the real force of religious truth! Alas! have you really made up your mind to perish?

Lastly, let us learn what awful revelations are in preparation for the world to come. These things of God which we will not look at now, but thrust away from our thoughts, are the things which occupy in their glory the region to which we go. God is there to be seen, the now unseen God. Heaven is there to be seen, the now unseen heaven. Hell is there to be seen, the now unseen hell; and eternity, with its yet unseen wonders, is manifest there. All are there; but not to present to us motives for submission to God. When we appear in the presence of the Eternal, it will be under the influence of a decision already made, and to await

the recompense which justice may assign to us. Then the time for choice will be past; but we shall assuredly see vast and glorious things, which will for ever demonstrate the wisdom of him who has trod the way to heaven, and his guilty madness who has chosen the way to hell. O things eternal! Must I see you some time so vividly, when I may no longer choose my part in you? Rather let me look at you now, and, by the contemplation of your glories while yet a choice is permitted me, be prepared for the approaching withdrawalment of the veil!

HYMN.

THE right thou speakest, Sovereign Lord;
Justice and truth is every word;
Thy tender and severe appeals
My inmost heart and conscience feels.

Why should they not with me prevail?
How can such matchless motives fail?
Duty and interest combine
With love to bow my will to thine.

My thoughtless heart still turns away,
Nor dares reflect, averse to obey;
And, to repel eternal things,
A thousand earthly trifles brings.

My course how guilty! and how vain!
I shun what I must meet again.
My long neglect, O Lord, forgive,
And teach me thoughtfully to live.

LECTURE V.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS ELEMENTS: 3, RETRIBUTION—ITS NATURE.

“I will recompense, saith the Lord.”—*Hebrews x. 30.*

THE three elements of which a government by persuasion properly consists are these: the first, knowledge of the will to be obeyed; the second, motives leading to obedience; the third, recompense according to the conduct pursued. Of

these as developed in God's government of man, we have already spoken of the first two; having contemplated the manner in which he has made known his will to mankind, and the motives by which he has solicited obedience to it. In our Lecture last Lord's day evening we found those motives to comprise an appeal, first, to the sense of duty; secondly, to the sense of gratitude; and, thirdly, to the sense of interest. The last idea introduces us immediately to the subject of our present Lecture, RETRIBUTION.

Retribution is an extremely important element in a system of government by persuasion. It may be said to be that which locks the various parts of the machinery together, and gives compactness and unity to the whole. It would be of little use to make known a will to be obeyed, or to solicit obedience by the most cogent motives, were there not an ultimate recompense, allotted alike where obedience has been rendered, and where it has been refused. A necessary part of a system of persuasive government, it is also the last. It completes the entire process, which naturally terminates when the issues have been respectively assigned. The care with which we consider the subject must correspond with its importance.

I caution you in the outset against a partial and inadequate view of retribution. Take care that you do not confine your sense of the word to one portion only of the recompenses included in it. You may be led by customary association to understand retribution of punishment exclusively; I am going to speak, however, not of the punishment of sinners only, but equally of the reward of the righteous. Both these are fitly, and, indeed, necessarily, comprehended in the general idea of retribution as attaching to a government by persuasion, and both should be present to our minds while discussing the subject.

In what mode, then, I proceed to ask, will God recompense the deeds of men?

The term retribution, naturally, and almost necessarily, directs our thoughts to a process, analogous to it certainly, which is going on in this world. A connexion exists now between virtue and happiness, between vice and misery. On the one hand, within our own hearts there is such a connexion. Doing right affords an inward pleasure, while wrongdoing creates an inward pain; so, at least, until the con-

science has become seared and insensible. These emotions become occasionally, and even frequently, very powerful. On the other hand, a similar connexion exists without us. God's providence is so arranged as, in many cases very obviously, to attach happy results to virtue, and painful ones to vice. This state of things, however, although it may well be taken as an intimation that a period of retribution will come, is not to be regarded as retribution itself. It is rather discipline than retribution. It supplies to us topics for consideration, and throws lights upon our path, but does not itself constitute the recompense of our actions. It is at once too feeble, too uncertain, and too incomplete for such a purpose.

Retribution naturally suggests also the idea of death, a period at which it would seem that something, if partial only, of the nature of retribution must accrue, both to the righteous and to the wicked; since something more of the manner in which God has regarded their respective conduct will then become known to them. But this cannot be deemed retribution, as we now speak of it. That connexion of moral good and evil, with their proper results, which was in this world characteristic of a well-ordered and righteous providence, doubtless remains, and it can be no longer, as here, an instrument of discipline; but that the experiences of that period, however vividly they may be realized, cannot constitute retribution itself, may appear from this, that by death the mode of human existence is materially modified. The body lies in the grave, and dissolves into dust, the spirit only survives in consciousness. In such a condition man is not ready for judgment. In the body he has done good or evil, and in his body will he receive according to the things that he has done. In order to this the body must be called into being again; the dead must awake to a resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust, ere they can be finally rewarded.

In truth, of the great act of retribution concluding God's dispensation of moral government it is to be said, as Paul said of a different event, "This thing was not done in a corner." That transaction, so interesting to the whole race of man, and intended as a manifestation and development of God's justice, is to be attended with a grand publicity. With this view, the apostle teaches us, God "hath appointed a day

wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ" (Acts xvii. 31). And the apocalyptic seer thus magnificently sketches the proceedings of the day:—"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation xx. 11-13).

It is not needful, however, to dwell upon this scene. The judgment is only a step in the administration of the government of God—a means to an end. We may proceed at once, therefore, to the consideration of retribution itself. Two principal questions arise in relation to it. First, what is its nature? Secondly, what is its duration? The subject that I take up this evening is presented to you by the former of these questions; it is the nature of future retribution. As with respect to this topic considerable diversity of opinion exists, my simplest method will be, in the first place, to notice some opinions from which I differ, and, in the second, to propound that which I hold.

I. I notice, in the first place, some opinions from which I differ.

1. First, it has been held that retribution consists exclusively in the natural results of righteousness and sin respectively. A system of divine law having been established, sin, or the violation of it, we are told, must, according to the natural course of things, be followed by punitive results in the way of necessary consequence. For the punishment of transgressions it is not necessary for anything to be actually done, or directly inflicted, by God. Things take their natural course, and they work out by necessary consequence suffering, sorrow, and death.

I respect the design in which this conception seems to have originated. It springs out of a wish to exempt God from an apparent liability to the charge of severity, as personally inflicting punishment upon the wicked. Actuated by a sincere regard for his glory, some persons would rather withdraw

him from such a position, so that they might be able to say of all the suffering which ensues upon sin, "It is not God that inflicts it; it occurs in the nature of things." They would thus give a kind of impersonal character to punishment, and withdraw God from any possibility of an unamiable imputation. It is well to be jealous of God's glory, but I do not, for my own part, see in this instance any occasion for delicacy. If, indeed, the punishment of sin were exclusively personal, and not official—an act of resentment and not a judicial infliction—I could see a ground for anxiety; but, since God, in the punishment of sinners, acts as a judge only, and simply carries out the obligations of his office, I see no reason why any concern should be cherished upon this matter. No one thinks that an earthly judge, when he passes the severest sentence upon a criminal, is indulging resentment, or doing anything for which there is a necessity for an apology; and the same view, I think, may be taken with respect to the ultimate sentence of the Judge of all the earth.

The conception before us, however, cannot be accepted as a satisfactory theory of retribution. Even if it might be admitted in relation to the punishment of sin (which it cannot), it could scarcely be so in relation to the reward of righteousness. When we look at that wherein heaven consists, evidently much more than natural sequences is there. You cannot resolve all that is said of the reward of the righteous into the necessary results of well-doing. And, if you cannot resolve heaven into sequences, neither can you resolve hell into sequences; they stand or fall together. If the theory does not account for both, it cannot satisfactorily account for either.

To this observation I may add, that such a scheme of retribution might seem like an abandonment upon God's part of government altogether. To say to a person, "I have so arranged things that if you do so and so you will find happy results, and if you act otherwise you will find painful results," is one thing; but to say to him, "I bring myself into relation to you as your governor; I require your obedience to me in this character, and I will reward you accordingly," is certainly quite another. In this personal relation and intentional action the very essence of persuasive government seems to consist; and, in renouncing it, God would appear to abandon altogether the system of government he proclaims.

In relation to this topic I observe, finally, that there is too much of personal import in the language employed by Holy Writ, to allow fairly of the conception of an impersonal retribution. Continually are we told in personal language of that which God will do to the obedient, and of that which he will do to the disobedient. Of this class of passages is that from which our text is taken, an Old Testament declaration quoted in the New: "Vengeance is MINE, I will recompense, saith the Lord." Such also is the language of the apostle, who teaches us that God "will render to every man according to his works" (Romans ii. 6). Quotations of this kind might be multiplied; and the phraseology is surely too significant and too precise to allow of the notion, that, in the retributive process, God takes no personal part. His recompense of the conduct of men cannot, in the face of such declarations, be resolved into mere sequences, and, as it were, the mechanical agencies of unconscious nature.

2. Secondly, it has been held that retribution consists, if not wholly, at least in part, of the happiness and misery directly produced by righteousness and sin. A course of well-doing engages the approving testimony of the conscience, and keeps all the powers in harmonious action; while a life of sin at once torments the heart by discord, and arouses the conscience to reproof. Is not this part of the punishment of sin, and of the reward of virtue?

There can be no doubt of the facts as thus stated, but I am not prepared to allow them to enter at all into the idea of retribution. As, on the one hand, retribution must imply the personal action of God in making recompense, so I conceive, on the other, that nothing more can be comprehended in it. I do not think more need be supposed, since the personal action of God is quite sufficient for the object in view. He does not want the influence of remorse to make up his wrath towards sinners, nor the serenity of a good conscience to supply any deficiency in the blessedness conferred on the saints. Moreover, God himself is the proper source from which the retributive element should be derived. It is he who commands, it is he who is obeyed or disobeyed, it is he who should reward or punish. The idea of retribution, as it requires God's personal action upon the one hand, so it should, in my judgment, be confined to it on the other.

3. Thirdly, it has been held that life and death are respec-

tively the recompenses of obedience and disobedience. This idea is founded upon various passages of Holy Writ, which give it an apparent countenance; but, without making quotations at large, it may be sufficient to cite one as a sample of the whole. Thus we read, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans vi. 23). I cannot concur in this view; and I make upon it the following observations.

(1). The conception has no scope. For, as I understand the Scripture, man is created immortal, and will live for ever whether righteous or wicked, without any award from the final judgment. Death is not the termination of man's existence. There is to be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust; and both are to enter on a state of which it is emphatically said that they cannot die any more. It is vain, therefore, to think of making life and death the reward of righteousness and the punishment of sin, to those who, without either righteousness or sin being regarded, will live for ever—will never die.

(2). As this conception has no scope, so it has no adequacy. Out of life and death you cannot make a heaven and a hell. Life is mere existence, and existence without sources of joy or pain is but a bare and tasteless thing. Or, if it be said that ideas of pain and pleasure must be added to those of life and death—that death must be understood of a miserable death, and life of a happy life—I reply, that this addition is both unwarranted and unfair. The question does not then relate to life and death, but to the misery and happiness connected with them, which are far more important in the case than life and death themselves; and there is a manifest fallacy in the argument as thus stated, which deprives it of all title to respect.

(3). And, as this suggestion has neither scope, nor adequacy, so it has no foundation. There is a misunderstanding, in fact, of the language on which it rests. With great emphasis we are told by persons of this opinion, that the apostle says, "The wages of sin is death;" but, in the sense in which we are now using this phrase, it is not true, either that the wages of sin is death, or that the apostle has said so. The doctrine laid down by the apostle is, not that every man's death is the wages of his own sin, but that the death of the race is the wages of one man's sin—the sin,

namely, of our first parents when they ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by [that] sin, and so death [hath] passed upon all men because [in Adam] all have sinned" (Romans v. 12). In truth, facts are continually before us which falsify the idea I am repudiating. Death the wages of sin! Then how is it that those die who have never sinned? If death be not the wages of some one else's sin instead of our own, what a multitude of infants, not being personally sinners, ought not to die. And since, in the sense in which we are now speaking, death is not the wages of sin, so neither is life the reward of righteousness.

(4). Lastly, while this conception has neither scope, adequacy, nor foundation, it has no necessity. Ample justice is done to the phraseology of Scripture in this respect, by assigning to the words in question a metaphorical meaning. If you take life and death as the representatives of happiness and misery respectively, you do all that is required by the scriptural use of those terms, and bring them into perfect harmony with other portions of the Word of God. Death is a figurative expression for the wrath of God, which "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans i. 18); and life for the everlasting blessedness which is reserved in heaven for the saints. Metaphors more apt, significant, and expressive, cannot be found.

4. Fourthly, it has been held that retribution consists of physical elements.

This idea is founded upon various scriptural descriptions of the happy and the miserable conditions of the future world. Thus, for example, we read: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation vii. 14-17). And, to take another passage from the same book: "The devil that deceived them was

cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation xx. 10, 15). Similar language occurs in our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31), where the happiness of Lazarus is made to consist in lying in Abraham's bosom, and Dives bewails himself as "tormented in flame." And in the parable of the last judgment (Matthew xxv. 31-46), the divine Teacher expresses the respective sentences thus: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Upon passages of this class the idea is founded that both heaven and hell consist of physical elements; that is, of pleasures and pains derived from physical sources.

Now I am not sure but I am doing some injustice in making this statement; for it is quite true, and very observable, that, by those who hold this opinion, an unequal stress is laid upon the different sides of the scriptural representation. It is not so strenuously inculcated that heaven is a region of flowery meadows and fruitful trees, as that hell is a lake burning with fire and brimstone. Why so singular a partiality should be shown to the gloomy and the terrible it might be difficult to understand, if no causes were in operation beyond a simple regard to the teaching of the Bible. The truth, however, is—and I confess to no uncharitableness in expressing this opinion—that the notion that hell is fire is fundamentally popish. It is one of the money-getting pretences of Romanism. For the sake of filthy lucre priests invented the fire of purgatory, out of which they have made untold millions of wealth. From the same origin sprang the notion that hell is fire; and no doubt they would have as assiduously inculcated the sister conceit that heaven consists of green fields, could they have reaped from it as large a pecuniary harvest. The more fearful and deeply inwrought of these opinions retains its hold on the popular mind, now that its pecuniary value is lost; and it has come to be regarded by Protestants as a part of the evangelical system which it is almost heterodox not to believe. For my own part, however, I do not believe it. I think it is an

absolutely false conception, and I will state some reasons for rejecting it.

(1). The elements of future retribution must, in the nature of things, be homogeneous. Although not the same, they must be similar; and, if the painful element be physical, the joyous element must be physical too. I require any man who really believes that hell is fire, to believe, upon the same authority, that heaven is a flowery mead and a luxurious feast. No one has a right to make a separation between the two; the representations must stand or fall together.

(2). The physical conception of heaven and hell is at variance with the spiritual nature of the world to which both belong. We are not to possess hereafter this carnal body, for the resurrection will bring forth from the grave the spiritual body, alike of the righteous and of the wicked. Now, without a carnal body we can possess no sensibility to the influences which appropriately and exclusively act upon it. What have fruit-bearing trees and flowing streams to do with a spiritual body? And what has fire, or any other physical element of suffering, to do with a spiritual body? There is an utter incongruity here, condemnatory of the whole conception. The entire condition of the future world must be as spiritual as that of the beings who inhabit it.

(3). There is a test by which the question whether the scriptural phraseology is to be taken literally or metaphorically may be easily and fairly tried. If it had been intended to be taken literally, there would have been a congruity between the various parts of it, so that you might have grouped them together, and have made a picture of the scene which they represent. But you cannot do this. If you will take the account of the city in the latter part of the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, you will find elements which you cannot arrange harmoniously; some particulars, indeed, are not only incompatible, but contradictory, as when we are told that "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (ver. 21). It is not that there is the smallest impropriety in using language after this manner. By accumulating metaphors incongruous one with another you may gain force, because every one may be made to contribute something to the illustration of your subject; but that the description thus resulting is incongruous, stamps it undeniably with a metaphorical character. It is the same in

this respect with the biblical descriptions of heaven and hell; the latter is no more congruous with itself than the former. If there were one uniform and simple physical description of hell, it might possibly be taken as literal, but it is not so. People speak principally of fire; but fire is not the only physical element mentioned. The worm is another, and darkness is a third. Now fire, darkness, and the worm, are incongruous elements; you cannot blend them together. If there be fire there must be light, for you cannot have intense burning and total darkness; neither can you have fire and worms, for the fire will destroy the worms. Thus are the three elements quite incongruous the one with the other, so that they cannot by possibility be literally understood. Nor is there any ground on which a selection may be made, so as to rid ourselves of those which we least prefer. One has no more right to choose fire than another to choose darkness, or a third party to choose worms. All you cannot have, and the result is that you may not have either, but must assign a metaphorical meaning to the whole.

(4). It is from a known literal fire that the notion of a burning hell is derived. In Hebrew hell is called gehenna. Now Gehenna (the valley of the son of Hinnom) was a valley near Jerusalem into which were cast unburied carcases; and, to arrest the mischiefs of their putrefaction, they were set on fire. There is the actual terrestrial fact from which the conception is derived; and this of itself is a demonstration that, in relation to the future world, we are to take the figure and not the letter.

(5). A metaphorical view of the terms in question is sufficient for the purpose of just scriptural interpretation. Take these phrases—fire, and worms, and darkness—as emblematical of God's anger as shown in the punishment which he will inflict upon sinners, and they all help your conception of some great and awful reality. So take city, foundations, gates, pearls, rivers, trees, and fruits, as emblematical of the joy which God shall impart to the righteous, and again they help your conception of something that is inexpressibly beautiful. In what manner can the inspired writer more naturally, or more effectively, illustrate what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man?

(6). Finally, take these terms literally, and they do not

make either a heaven or a hell. Put together all the trees, fields, rivers, and precious stones, ever seen or heard of, and you can make no heaven such as a renewed heart craves after; while all the fires that ever were kindled, all the darkness that ever brooded upon the face of the deep, and all the worms that ever gnawed putrefying carcases, will not make a hell awful enough for the punishment of human iniquity. Under the form of fire you make a hell revolting, indeed, but not severe; for I apprehend there are many sources of physical suffering much more durable, and much more intense, than fire. It may be observed also, that, by regarding hell as literal fire, there is created just one measure of suffering, not capable of being modified as the diversities of human conduct require. The ill desert of mankind differs without end. Some are to receive much punishment on account of many advantages, some are to receive little because they have enjoyed few; but, if all are to be cast into one common lake of fire and brimstone, no diversity at all worthy of the name of a difference can exist. The elements employed will not meet the moral necessities of the case.

II. Having thus noticed some opinions from which I differ, I come to propound that which I hold. I hold, then, that the single and exclusive element of retribution is the approbation or the disapprobation of God. Let this idea be set, first, in the light of Scripture, and then in that of its own adaptation.

1. First, set this idea in the light of Scripture. I have already noticed such of the scriptural representations of the future world as embody physical elements, and have sufficiently shown their figurative character. The observation I now make is, that, together with many metaphors, the Bible contains also, in relation to this subject, some literal expressions. This is a literal declaration, for example—"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans i. 18). Wrath is an affection of the mind which, as transferred from ourselves, we ascribe to God. Here is no figure. So with respect to the better world we have these phrases: "To depart and to be with Christ" (Philippians i. 23); "absent from the body, and present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians v. 8); "so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians iv. 17). These are not metaphors, but phrases of direct and simple import.

Now, where there are declarations not metaphorical, what is required is, not practically to ignore them by sinking them in the metaphors, but to allow them to take their proper place as the principal passages, and to use them as a clue for the explanation of the rest. All the metaphors that are used in reference to future happiness and misery are explicable in conformity with this rule. The anger of God is a source of pain, towards a conception of which every term employed to denote pain—whether fire, or darkness, or worms—may help us; and the presence of Christ is a source of bliss, to the better understanding of which, also, any terms expressive of pleasure—whether derived from the city and its palaces, the garden and its fruits, or the feast and its luxuries—may effectively contribute. The whole testimony of Scripture, literal and metaphorical, is satisfied by this mode of treating it.

2. Secondly, set this idea in the light of its own adaptation.

(1). It accords with the *nature* of the case. The element of retribution, I have said, is the approbation or disapprobation of God. Unquestionably, he is capable of expressing these sentiments, and of doing so in a manner which shall be deeply felt. There can be no doubt but he has immediate and intimate access to the human consciousness, and can make the state of his mind towards us felt with a vividness and power beyond our present conception. My view, therefore, accords with the nature of the case. The employment of God's approbation or disapprobation as the element of retribution is not only possible, but easy and natural, according to the various faculties and attributes of the parties concerned.

(2). It accords with the *equity* of the case. For, while, with respect to all other modes both of reward and punishment, we feel a want of equity, here our sense of equity is at once and fully satisfied. If the righteous are to be rewarded, one does not see readily the fitness of their being rewarded by being taken to a region where there are beautiful rivers and copious fruits; or if the wicked are to be punished, it is not a thing of manifest justice that they should be put into the fire; but that God should express his approbation of well-doing, and his disapprobation of evil doing, is evidently just. Praise and blame we attach, alike to our own conduct

and to one another's, when right or wrong. This we all feel just and necessary, only let the praise or blame be rightly awarded, and be proportionate to the merit or demerit of the case. If you carry on this idea to God's future judgment, and say that retribution consists in his praise and blame rightly awarded, and made proportionate to the conduct of men, there can be no complaint against such a process. It is essential equity. It is the same thing that we do, both to ourselves and to others; and, never complaining of its being done to us by our fellow-creatures, we cannot complain of its being done to us by our Maker.

(3). It accords with the *magnitude* of the case. You want in this matter great joy, and great sorrow; for which reason you cannot have a city, a palace, or a garden, nor can you have fire, or worms, or darkness. They will not make you a grand retribution, strain them to their utmost; you want something more sublime, something not only more just, but at the same time more intense. God's approbation and disapprobation will answer the end. God's approbation is now, as we know, the source of the most intense delight that it is possible for man's heart to feel; and, if this be so on earth, what must it be in heaven? In like manner, God's wrath, or a sense of his displeasure, men's consciences have already felt as if kindling a very hell within them, and causing them an agony which they would gladly have exchanged for any kind or amount of physical suffering. What must the agony be in hell? What must be the bliss and woe of the future world, where God's approbation and disapprobation, his wrath and love, his holy sense of our conduct according to its deserts, shall be brought home to our hearts? Whatever you want in the way of intensity, of boundless joy or of boundless woe, here is the true source and fountain of it. In God's love, and in God's wrath, you may find both for the heart of man. And this marvellous sensibility of man's heart to God's wrath or love is evidently given, not only for the purpose of discipline now, but as a preparation for retribution at the last.

(4). It accords with the *complexity* of the case. The retributive process is of necessity a delicate one; since the cases to be treated are of boundless variety, and they cannot be treated in the mass, but each must have its separate estimate and award. I have just observed that out of physical

elements no adequate diversity of treatment can be formed ; but of this spiritual element, God's approbation and disapprobation, we may conceive endless degrees. If there be a small amount of ill desert, as there may have been a small amount of the means of knowledge, God's disapprobation may be proportionate to it, even if it be so little as may be exhibited by a child ; and if there be a large amount of ill desert, as in a case where many advantages have been possessed, God's disapprobation may be augmented accordingly. With respect to the righteous, also, the approbation of God may be more or less amply manifested, and thus become a source of proportionate joy to the saints in glory. So through all degrees may this element of retribution be modified in its administration, nor is there any other that can be made so exactly commensurate with the varieties of human conduct.

For the reasons I have thus briefly stated, I hold with full satisfaction the opinion that I have propounded to you.

In concluding this discourse, I naturally turn, in the first place, to the position which the element of retribution, as we have now ascertained it, holds in God's government of man. Certainly the provision made for the consummation of this government is at once marvellously simple and gloriously effective. He devised for it no special recompenses, he created no new elements of punishment and reward. The expression of his approbation and disapprobation, as either may have been deserved, accomplishes everything. And while, by a process so sublimely simple, the great Ruler effects every purpose of his administration, he at once satisfies his friends and silences his foes. For those whom he may have to reward, no recompense can be more joyous than his love ; and for those whom he may have to punish, no suffering can be more terrible than his displeasure. While the happy are unutterably blessed, those who suffer find nothing of which they can complain. No one can say, "Eternal God, there is might in thy hand, but thou hast inflicted an unjust punishment. I disobeyed thy will, but there is no equitable relation between my disobedience and its penalty."

I turn, in the second place, to the solemn prospect which is before us. Assuredly, the retribution to which we have to look forward is of the gravest kind. At once are its lights

brilliant, and its shadows deep. Its glorious and its fearful aspects catch hold alike on our most exquisite sensibilities, and are fitted to excite them to an incalculable intensity. All that is illustrious and gratifying on earth vanishes before the immortal glory and honour with which obedience is to be rewarded; while suffering of every kind is naught in comparison with almighty wrath. O! it is a solemn, a stirring, reflection, that God has made these to be the ultimate conditions of our being—issues respectively of a life of righteousness and sin. “What manner of persons ought we to be!” If wisdom and folly are continually displayed by us in our pursuit of worldly things, in no case can they be brought out so conspicuously as in our treatment of the blessedness, or the wrath, to come. In comparison with the former of these, what good should be sought after? In comparison with the latter of them, what evil should be shunned?

If, indeed, there be any of you living a life of sin, and you are resolved still to follow it, I can conceive that you may be disposed, by a willing misuse of the view that I have given, to say, “There will, at least, be no fire; and I can bear anything else.” What ignorance and folly are here! Does not your own nature teach you, even now, that there are things in this world which you could far less easily bear than to be burned in a fire? The anguish of a tormented heart, and of an accusing conscience, is unutterably worse than a consuming flame. Do not you know that it is? The agony of the wrath of God, the sorrow resulting from his eternal frown, will be worse to you than all fire; at once more terrible, and more just. Ah! bethink you of what you have to meet; bethink you of that day of recompense, when you must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive the counterpart of all the evil that you have done, transmuted into the wrath of God, and poured out upon your soul! Stand back, and say—“O hell! eternal hell! whereof everlasting fire were but a faint and feeble emblem, shall I encounter thee?”

Child of God!—reconciled to his government, obedient to his will, and heir of his glory!—look onward, too, but with transporting joy. O! there is heaven enough for you—is there not?—in that love of God already so dear to your

heart, and at times so ravishing. Only be covetous of it; and so live that he may say, when at last he shall be your Judge, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

HYMN.

MY God, by what a simple tie
Thou bind'st my thrilling heart to thee!
Beams from thy pleased or angry eye
My utmost joy or misery.

The recompense how equal 'tis!
Nor friend, nor foe, can e'er complain;
The woe's thy frown, thy smile the bliss,
In measure due of joy, or pain.

'Tis equal, but tremendous too;
'Tis what immortal spirits feel:
How high the bliss, how deep the woe,
Not strongest lights or shades reveal.

My soul, awake! These wondrous joys,
And griefs unknown, comprise thy doom;
Wake, ere thou hear the startling voice,
"The day of recompense is come!"

LECTURE VI.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS ELEMENTS: 3, RETRIBUTION—ITS DURATION.

"The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—2 *Corinthians* iv. 18.

IN entering, in our last Lecture, upon the consideration of the third element of God's government of man, retribution, I observed that two principal questions arose concerning it; the one relating to its nature, the other to its permanence. The question relating to the nature of retribution we then entertained, and we came to the conclusion that it consisted in the single element of God's approbation, measured in its expression by the desert of human conduct. This point I must now assume, as I have to lay it at the basis of my present discourse.

I lay also at the basis of this discourse the doctrine, or fact, call it which you will, of man's natural immortality. I might, for my present purpose, assume this position without argument, the more so, indeed, as to go into argument upon it at any length would not here be possible; but I will just, in two or three passing observations, hint at the principal arguments to be adduced in its support.

First, that man is naturally immortal has been the opinion, in all ages, of the great majority of mankind. This fact is disputed by none; and it is assuredly a significant fact, and one requiring to be accounted for. Only three ways of accounting for it have been deemed possible: the belief is either a suggestion of the devil, or a fiction of philosophy, or a primeval revelation. For my own part, I accept the last of these solutions.

Secondly, the earliest records of our race imply the existence of the primeval revelation indicated by the prevailing opinion of mankind. In the beginning of the book of Genesis we find no intimation of a natural cessation of man's being. As there so solemnly introduced, death appears, not as a natural, but as a penal interruption of human life, and as absolutely contingent on transgression. It is obvious to conclude that, since this is all that was intimated concerning a change of being, a deathless existence was the natural and the known prerogative of our race.

Thirdly, that man is naturally immortal was the opinion, throughout its whole history, of the most enlightened, and the only divinely-enlightened, nation in the world. The Jews always held it. It was the basis of their current language in the earliest times. Our Lord shows this by a quotation which he makes from the Old Testament (Luke xx. 37, 38): "Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living." The life with which the great Teacher connects this declaration is evidently life immortal.

Fourthly, the natural immortality of man was taught by Jesus Christ himself. It was so, in part, negatively. For, as it was an opinion avowedly held by the Jews when he was among them, it is quite plain that, if he had not held it too, he would have corrected it as an error, which he did not.

He gave it thus his tacit sanction. But more than this. When the Sadducees put to him a question concerning future life, he explicitly taught—almost more explicitly than he ever taught any other doctrine during his whole ministry—the doctrine of man's natural immortality. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world," said he, "and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; *neither can they die any more*: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx. 35, 36).

Fifthly, the natural immortality of man lies at the foundation of Christianity. Not that, of itself, it belongs to Christianity, or is a part of it; but it lies at the foundation of it. Ponder, for example, the following language: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy i. 9, 10). We are here taught that Christ "abolished death," that is to say, that he laid the foundation for the recovery of the body from the grave, so bringing to light immortal life; but what contribution could a resurrection of the body make towards an immortal life, if the soul were not already immortal? An immortal body and a perishing soul would have been the extremest absurdity.

Sixthly, the natural immortality of man is embodied in the great fact of Christianity, the person of Jesus Christ. In him is the divine nature united to the human; a fact which supplies to my mind a proof irrefragable that the human nature is destined to an existence as permanent as the divine. Suppose only that the human nature with which the divine is connected in the person of Christ should come to a natural term, a period when it would, according to its nature, expire, and you have thus the human and the divine rent helplessly asunder, and the person of God incarnate itself dissolved.

I pass, however, from this topic, which is only collateral, to my immediate theme, which is the permanence of retribution.

In relation to this subject, I observe in the outset that I

speak of retribution as a whole. If I shall represent it as eternal, I shall not affirm the eternity of future punishment alone; I shall affirm equally the eternity of future reward. The two are, in my judgment, so united that it is indispensable thus to treat them. My view of the case is this. Under God's government man is subjected to a moral probation; or, in other words, by the presentation of motives he is put to the proof as to what he will do. Not the whole of man's existence, however, is occupied with this tentative process; after a time it ceases, and the system to which it belongs is wound up by an act of retribution, or allotment of recompenses. These two processes correspond with the two great divisions of human life: probation takes place here, retribution hereafter; the former belongs to this world, the latter to the world to come. The question before us is, therefore, whether retribution, painful and pleasant, occupies the entire portion of man's existence after death, or, to speak more strictly, after the general judgment? Man living for ever, retribution, if permanent, will be also eternal. I maintain the affirmative of this question. I hold that retribution will occupy the whole of man's future existence.

Allow me to present to you some arguments by which I support this opinion.

I. I support it, first, by the declarations of Holy Scripture.

Among these it is natural that I should, in the first place, direct your attention to the text. "The things that are seen," says the apostle, "are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." Admitting that some limitation must be attached to this language—that is to say, admitting that the apostle is not speaking of absolutely *all things* seen and unseen—it is clear that it must be understood to comprehend all things relating to the interests of mankind. Everything belonging to our welfare that is seen, or is appreciable by the senses, is temporal—or, to use a better word, temporary, that is, of a limited duration; the things affecting us which are not seen, or are not appreciable by the senses, are eternal. The former have an end, the latter have no end. Now, among these unseen things which affect our welfare, undoubtedly retribution must be one. It may be justly said that it is the chief.

I refer you to another passage. It occurs at the close of the parable in which our Lord discourses of the judgment to

come. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew xxv. 46). Here the two aspects of retribution are combined in one and the same representation of permanence. The phraseology, indeed, should have been identical—"These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal;" for the word in the Greek is the same, and there is no reason why there should be any difference in the English. I do not know a declaration which can come from higher authority, or which can be more directly and emphatically to the point. Does it require more than a little candour and simplicity of mind to receive it in its obvious import?

I refer you to a third passage, which is to be found in John iii. 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." I wish you to observe the simple form of affirmation here, inasmuch as it withdraws this passage from an objection to which those I have already quoted are liable. They contain the word *eternal*, and we are told by some critics that *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* (the Greek words employed) do not denote absolute eternity. It would be unsuitable in this place to go into a critical disquisition on such a point, but, happily, it is not necessary. In the text now before us we have not the word *eternal*. And what is declared in it? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son *shall not see life*." This is a direct and simple negation. If ever throughout eternity an unbeliever were to "see life," or to become happy, this text would be falsified. By the concluding part of the verse, also—"the wrath of God abideth on him"—a permanent condition seems to be expressed beyond all possibility of question.

I refer you, further, to a class of scriptural phrases for which I need not mention any particular texts; and I observe, generally, that the metaphors employed respecting future happiness and misery imply eternity. I readily admit that these passages are of no force with those who deny man's natural immortality, since, if existence ceases, both happiness and misery cease also; but, as applied to an existence affirmed to be endless, the metaphors cannot denote anything less than a permanent and eternal issue. For example, life and death, as metaphorically used to denote

happiness and misery, and as applied to an endless existence, surely must denote endless happiness and misery. Destruction and perdition, as applied to an endless existence, a case in which they cannot denote extinction of being, must also denote permanent or everlasting unhappiness. After the same manner the inheritance of the saints is said to be "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Peter i. 4).

I hold, therefore, upon the strongest grounds of scriptural teaching, that retribution in both its parts, the happy and the miserable, is permanent; it occupies the whole future existence of man.

II. I support this affirmation, in the second place, by the congruity of the case. For the happier part of retribution is admitted on all hands to be everlasting. No one supposes that there will be a temporary heaven, or that the celestial glory will come to an end; it is conceived only that there will be a temporary hell. But I ask on what ground, or by what right, the two parts of retribution can be separated one from another? I deny the right. I affirm that reason should be shown for it; and no reason can be shown for it, save the mere reason of feeling. There is no difference in the phraseology of Scripture respecting both. There is no difference in the ground of moral desert on which both are allotted. There is not a shadow of scriptural warrant for regarding hell as less permanent than heaven.

III. I support this affirmation, thirdly, by the unsatisfactoriness of the alternative.

For, if retribution be not permanent, what is to take place? I take no notice here of the scheme which advocates the annihilation of the wicked, because I have already in this discourse assigned my reasons for repudiating the conception, and maintaining the natural immortality of man. There is another scheme, however, on which I propose now to make some remarks. According to it we are still to have an eternal heaven, and, in addition to this, the whole universe of sinful and miserable beings is to be made ultimately happy. Upon what grounds, I ask, is our assent required to such a scheme?

First of all there is laid with great breadth and positivity this ground, that it is impossible to conceive that God, infinitely benevolent as he is, will allow any creature to be

everlastingly miserable. A feeling of this kind is so strong in the minds of some persons, that argument with them is entirely precluded. They avow that they will rather believe the doctrine of universal restitution, or any other doctrine, than believe that any being will suffer eternally. It may be so, and far be it from me to question the amiableness of the feeling so strongly cherished ; but, in matters of truth, it is not safe to be guided by our feelings. You would rather it were so. But suppose that the prerogative you thus claim of selecting your opinions as you would rather hold them were extended to others also, who have at least as much right to it as yourself, where then would truth be? Men's preferences would assuredly tear it into rags.

Some passages of Scripture, however, are quoted, which are supposed to affirm that, in the end, there will not be left in the whole universe any element of either sin or misery. Thus in Psalm v. 4: "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." Another of similar import occurs in Habakkuk i. 13: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." It is said that, if any sin or misery be left in the universe, God must "see" it, and it must "dwell with" him, since he occupies infinity. I can only marvel upon what very slender evidence we sometimes reach conclusions at which we are anxious to arrive. Nothing is more evident to me than that these passages do not mean what is alleged, but that the language employed denotes only God's necessary abhorrence of evil. The connexion shows this. Thus the Psalmist proceeds—"Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity." In like manner the prophet—"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

We are also told of a phrase which occurs in the New Testament, a phrase of which the advocates of this opinion have made a use more fortunate than just. They call their doctrine, indeed, by the name of it, the doctrine of the restitution of all things; and they tell us that such an event is spoken of by the apostle in Acts iii. 21. In examining

this allegation we may read from the 19th verse: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Here, undoubtedly, is the phrase, "restitution of all things." I affirm, however, that universalists have no right to this phrase; and for this plain reason, that it has no proper place in the text, as a very slight and easy criticism will make apparent. A comma improperly placed leads to a false conclusion concerning the phrase "restitution of all things." If you obliterate the comma after the word *things* and read the passage without it, you will arrive at the correct meaning. "Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets." The apostle is not speaking, generally, of the restitution of all things; but, in a limited sense, of the restitution of all the things which God had spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets—which is a very different matter. But, you may ask, how can we have a restitution—that is, a restoration—of the things which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets? Whether these be things already accomplished, in process of accomplishment, or altogether future, they are not things of which we can have a restoration. Exactly so. The difficulty you have arrived at is this: when you come to see that this phrase relates to "the things spoken by the prophets," you see also that the word "restitution" is without meaning, and that the passage requires a different term. What term will suit the place better? Put the word *fulfilment* in the place of "restitution," and the sense is rendered plain. "Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of the fulfilment of all the things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets." That is to say, Christ will not return to this world until all the things spoken by the prophets are fulfilled. That is clearly the meaning of this passage. I can assure you, upon the authority of Greek scholars, that *fulfilment* is a proper rendering of the original word; and you yourselves, who know nothing of Greek, can see that by it the meaning of the passage is properly given. I assert,

therefore, with confidence, that the text has nothing whatever to do with the alleged restoration of all things, to which it has been supposed to relate.

We are referred, however, to some magnificent passages, one in the epistle to the Ephesians, and another in the epistle to the Colossians, which seem to intimate some such glorious event. Thus Paul to the Ephesians: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Ephesians i. 10). And the text in Colossians (ch. i. 20) is of similar import. These undoubtedly are deeply interesting portions of God's Word; all I have to observe about them here, however, is that they are, in my judgment, unfit for controversial use; passages which cannot be introduced into the discussion on either side, because, on any interpretation, they are "hard to be understood." It is an established rule of controversy, and an obvious dictate of common sense, that, in order to be of any use in illustration, or in argument, a portion of Scripture must itself be both intelligible and undisputed. The passages before us are certainly not the latter, perhaps not the former. If any one can decisively and positively say what they mean, let him employ them; but I do not think they are plain enough to be available as weapons of war to the universalist.

To return, however, to a narrower scope, and to speak only of that which affects the human race, for which we know a redemption is provided, I put the question thus: If there is to be an ultimate blessedness for the whole of the human race, in what way may we conceive of it as produced? There seem to me to be but two ways. Either there must be an absolute act of pardoning and sanctifying grace for the whole body of those condemned at the judgment; or there must be an additional state of probation, of which it shall be a condition that all and every one shall accept its benefits—for, if any be disobedient to that second Gospel, as many have been to the first, there will still be a remnant in misery. Now, as to these two modes, certainly the Scripture says nothing of either. We have never heard it alleged that any passage of Holy Writ intimates anything of the kind. And, undoubtedly, these are things so directly bearing upon the welfare of the human race, that, had they been true, they surely would have been told us. The entire

language and bearing of the Bible is unquestionably adverse to them both.

To speak of the matter theoretically, however. What ground can we conceive to be laid for an act of absolute mercy to the guilty part of human kind, when they have been neither inequitably tried, nor unjustly condemned? Or where would be the use of a new dispensation of probational mercy, when, certainly, we could not anticipate that the result of it would be at all more favourable than that of the past? Or is such a system to be made more influential? Is more grace to be shown? Are stronger motives to be presented? Is more to be told of God's heart of love, of his stroke of justice, and of the eternity to which both pertain? What a reflection such a dispensation would cast upon the present Gospel! Certainly men have but their due in the judgment; and no dispensation of relief could issue from God, but as a kind of apology for some defect or impropriety, disclosed at the last moment, in that which has gone before—an attitude which it is inconceivable he should ever assume.

I return, then, to the position I have taken, that retribution in both its aspects, painful and pleasant, will occupy the whole future of man's existence.

IV. I should be very willing to devote some minutes to the consideration of objections to this view, if there were any entitled to regard. Objections to the eternity of future *punishment* merely I do not notice, because I cannot consent to argue concerning either part of retribution alone. With respect to God's government of man as involving a permanent retribution, the serious questions asked are these two. First, Whether there is essential equity in setting a permanent retribution against temporary, and perhaps momentary, offences? And, secondly, If there be, whether there is also in such a system, with its fearful risks, genuine wisdom? But are the objections implied in these questions really entitled to regard? No difference can be made by them in the fact. Whether, according to the best views that we can form, the dispensation be essentially just or genuinely wise, God has instituted it, and, whatever our opinion may be, the fact is the same. No man of common sense will anticipate that what God has ordained shall not be realized because he happens to think it wanting in wisdom or in justice. But to take up these questions for a moment.

First, it is asked whether it is just to set an endless retribution against a limited and brief period of probation. In this matter let our own doings instruct us. To set the future against the present is a plan which we are constantly adopting. We continually make the future condition of those with whom we have to deal depend upon their present conduct; and in many cases we make the whole of the future to depend upon a deed which may be done in a moment. We transport a man for life for a fraud, and inflict the punishment of death for a murder. It is God's plan also, as it is our own, to set the future against the present. In his providence in this world, he makes deeds which may be done in a very short time influence a man's well-being as long as he lives—I was going to say, long after he lives, for the effect of the conduct of a single moment may be felt by his posterity to many generations. Now these facts, that it is a system which we ourselves employ, and one which God in this world adopts, make it both probable that it will be adopted in the world to come, and reasonable that it should be so. We neither know, nor are led to anticipate, anything in the future state which can be deemed likely to subvert the leading principles on which God has acted in the present.

And as to the duration of retribution, do you think (if I may address myself to a supposed objector) you can change the arrangement for the better? Suppose you were to add a thousand years to man's life, would that materially alter the conditions of the experiment? Suppose you were to let man live a hundred thousand years upon probation, still that more extended period would be as a moment compared with eternity. You really challenge the possibility of any probationary existence, of any retributive system at all, as applied to a being of natural immortality. But, then, do you really think that heaven also should not be permanent? Are immortal glory and honour too extended a recompense for obedience? If heaven may be endless, why may not its awful counterpart be so? The justice of both stands upon the same foundation, and is to be vindicated upon the same principle; and the plea for an eternal heaven and a temporary hell is merely a plea for indulgence of iniquity.

We come now to the second question. Is a system involving a permanent retribution one of genuine wisdom?

Would it not have been better, since the system of administration which God has chosen involves a liability to eternal suffering, to have passed such a dispensation by? In reply to this question it is obvious to remark, that such a course would have unworthily abandoned without an effort a magnificent scheme, on account of a merely anticipated difficulty in its execution. It is not to be forgotten, however, that there is a method of compensation by which evil in one direction may be counterbalanced by good in another, and that in the works of God this method seems to have been extensively pursued. With respect to the vast amount of physical suffering which is in the world, the most considerable advance which can be made towards the solution of the mystery is effected by supposing that a compensatory process, which is obvious in some cases, actually exists in all. It is evidently no principle of God's to avoid pain, but rather to make it, in some way or other—sometimes manifest, sometimes inscrutable—consistent with his benevolence; and it is not unreasonable to believe that the same principle pervades all his operations. There is, indeed, not a shadow of reason for supposing that moral evil, and its attendant suffering, constitute an exception to the wise care with which he has systematically treated physical evil. The contrary may be strongly assumed to be the fact, since the interests involved in the former are far more important than those affected by the latter. To say that no compensating arrangement can be adequate if the punishment of sinners be eternal, is merely to extract from the elements of a particular case a difficulty which does not affect the general argument. To devise an arrangement compensatory of endless suffering may require skill not less than infinite, but assuredly it is not for us, whose wisdom is so limited, to affirm that it is impossible. The case is this. Seeing that some men rush wilfully into ruin, can God balance this result to his general administration by his conduct towards others—by the elevated felicity, for example, which he shall secure to them, and the wise and gracious methods by which he shall lead them to it? The solution of this problem is evidently beyond us. God himself, who has taken the responsibility, in the face of all difficulties, of establishing the system which permits of endless suffering, takes upon himself also the responsibility of answering the question in the end. Let us wait till the end comes, and we can hear his reply.

Such are the views which I have to present to you on this occasion. In my judgment, retribution, God's repayment of the conduct of man under his persuasive administration, is permanent. The joys and the sorrows which his approbation and disapprobation bring are abiding; and, since man's being is endless, they also are endless.

What a solemn fact it is which is thus before us! "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Ay, that glorious heaven, that awful hell, both are eternal. Those joys, those sorrows, never end. What a solemn thought! This is the destiny for which we are living, a realm of endless joy, a realm of endless sorrow. I must be in one of them, and you, dear hearer, must be in one of them; each of us must be in one of them for ever. And in which of them? This is to be determined by our present conduct. The real question is whether we keep, or whether we break, God's commandments. Is it not a solemn, an awful, thing to live with such a prospect?

Nothing more absolutely confesses the commanding, and all but overwhelming grandeur of this consideration, than man's dislike to it. Some have said, "Do prove to me that there is no hell, for I cannot live comfortably if I think there is one." On the same principle others cry, "Do prove to me that there is no everlasting hell;" and some tender-hearted Christians strive to think that there is none. Ah! that very aversion confesses the majesty of the fact. And what will you do? Will you turn your back upon it? Will you shut your eyes to it? Will you, with a demonstration that there is before you an eternity of joy and woe, live as though there were not? God forbid! Open your eyes, and see. Let your judgment command your heart. Look at the things which are not seen, and not at the things which are seen; for the things which are not seen are eternal. Say whether you mean to dwell in that endless agony, or whether you mean to grasp that everlasting joy. This is the question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Why are you asking, What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed, with a heaven and a hell before you which you dare not contemplate? O men! rational men, acute men, men of sound sense and quick understanding, men of large speculation and

powerful action! when will you begin to grapple with the great and the real? What childish toys, what vanishing atoms, what momentary trifles, are these upon which all your energies are expended; and the things eternal—the only magnificent and abiding—you neglect. Yet you think yourselves wise men, and glory that you gain distinction, and acquire wealth; all to be abandoned as you pass into the darkness of the grave, while the glories of a neglected heaven, and the terrors of a forgotten hell, will smite you with everlasting amazement and despair.

Ah! my brethren, for those of us who have taken hold of things eternal, who have repented of sin and fled to Jesus, who have grasped the hand of mercy held out to us from on high, let us rejoice that the heaven to which we go hath no end, that its sun never sets, that its joy never decays. Blessed be God for such a prospect, adapted as it is to lift us up above all life's toils and trials. With the apostle, we may triumphantly exclaim, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

HYMN.

FOR EVER! What a glorious word,
Which to the future bliss belongs;
To enjoy thy ceaseless smiles, O Lord,
Awakens everlasting songs.

But who can bear that piercing eye,
Which ne'er a gentler glance shall know?
FOR EVER! 'Tis the deepest sigh
That bursts from realms of future woe.

And these, my soul, before thee stand,
For thee the eternal woe, or weal;
A heaven or hell on either hand,
Hid by a slender parting veil.

How soon withdrawn that veil will be,
And full revealed the things unseen!
While things of brief mortality
Vanish as though they ne'er had been.

LECTURE VII.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS TENDENCY: OR, THE GUIDE TO HUMAN HAPPINESS.

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.”—*Micah* vi. 8.

WE have now arrived at a point considerably advanced in our consideration of God's government of man. We have ascertained that there is a fair scope for it in the nature of man himself, and a just foundation for it in man's relation to God. We have also noticed the elements of which it consists; knowledge, motive, and retribution. Thus far we find on God's part nothing to complain of. He does us no wrong. All his conduct is equitable and just. But for man this is evidently a very serious affair. To be so constituted as to be susceptible of government, to be laid hold of by a superior power and made a subject of government, a being at once supreme and righteous assuming to deal with him in a way of authority, and making him liable to the gravest and most awful issues—this, assuredly, is for man no trifle. Upon such an announcement he may well exclaim, “But is this kind as well as just? What is it that is about to be done to me? What is the tendency of this system, and its bearing on my welfare and my happiness?” Let us now, therefore, take up a question at once so reasonable and so interesting, and inquire into the TENDENCY of God's government of man. Whither does it tend?

In answer to this question I lay down at once a general principle, and affirm that the tendency of God's government of man is benevolent; it is adapted and designed to be his guide to happiness.

I. Allow me, in the first place, to present to you some proofs of this affirmation.

1. I observe, first, that the presumption is in favour of it.

For this government of man by persuasion and recompense is God's government; and, considering what God is, his character is a guarantee that it shall be benign. Why, indeed, should it be otherwise? Is God apt to malevolent affections? Certainly not. His emotional nature is a love of the holy, the beautiful, and the blest. The malign affections are infi-

nately remote from him. Is God liable to imperfect and mistaken methods? Certainly not. His way is perfect, and that which he aims at he secures with undeviating certainty. Has God any reason for being unkind to man in particular? I speak of man now, not as a sinner, but as a creature. Certainly not. Man is his child, and no parent ever had cause more lovingly to treat a child than he. Is God in other respects unkind to man? Does he starve his body? Does he make his senses a source of torment? Does he doom him to solitude? Certainly not. His arrangements of every other kind are most benign. Then why not this? What an anomaly, what a contradiction, would it be in God's ways towards man, if, surrounding him with kindness in every other respect, he had instituted a system of government that was unkind! Nay, look to God's treatment of man as a sinner. See how he has pitied the rebel, and made provision at an incalculable cost for his redemption. Is it possible to conceive that he who has loved a rebellious creature so well, has been severe towards a child that had not rebelled? I repeat, then, that the presumption is strongly in favour of the affirmation that God's government of man is benign.

2. I observe, secondly, that the language of Scripture confirms it.

I shall not here lay stress upon the words of the text, because I am aware that, although emphatically true, they are not in their connexion related to our subject. There is a passage of Scripture, however, which relates directly to this matter, and asserts that which I have laid down in unequivocal terms. Writing to the Romans, the apostle says, "the law is holy, and just, and good" (Romans vii. 12). When it is said that the law is "good," the meaning is that it is conducive to happiness, benevolent in its scope and design. Of a law the requirements of which tended to misery, it never could be said that it was good. In the tenth verse of the same chapter the apostle further lays down this brief but important principle—"the commandment was ordained to life." Meaning by "the commandment" the same thing that he had spoken of before under the term "law;" and denoting generally by both God's system of persuasive government, he thus opens and declares its design. He says that it "was ordained to life." With all its arrangements and liabilities, it was God's plan for promoting and securing

the happiness of man. And the whole tenour of Scripture is in accordance with the principle here laid down. "His commandments," says the apostle John, "are not grievous" (1 John v. 3). "My yoke," said Jesus, "is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew xi. 30). In this manner the New Testament repeats the testimony of the Old. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments" (Psalm cxii. 1). Thus the language of Scripture abundantly confirms the affirmation I have made.

3. I observe, thirdly, that an examination of the system demonstrates it.

(1). Look, in the first place, at the requirements of God's government.

Contemplate their essential nature. The law, as we have just found the apostle saying, is holy. Now there is in the nature of things an intimate and inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness, and, on the other hand, an equally close alliance between sin and misery; and, if the law of God be holy, as it is affirmed to be, it must tend to happiness. No one keeping it could be made wretched by it, could find it curtail his real joys, or obstruct his true felicity. What is holy must be happy.

Contemplate their general development. Thus our blessed Lord has given it to us. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew xxii. 37, 39). How obviously conducive to happiness are these precepts, or, rather, is this single precept! The affection, love, of which it requires the culture, is itself the happiest of all the affections, especially when its kindling power is directed to an object fully worthy of it, and fitted at once to awaken its energies and to recompense them. What can be more fitted to engage a noble love than the character of God? And what more fitted to provide for love a noble recompense? A similar observation evidently applies with proportionate force to the exercise of love towards our neighbour. Precepts like these are manifestly benign. They must have been intended to lead to happiness, and cannot lead to any other issue.

Contemplate them in detail. Examine the specific precepts with which the Bible abounds, from those of the decalogue to the minuter ones of the gospels and the epistles. It might seem, perhaps, that the moral traveller would find

himself bewildered in a thorny and inextricable labyrinth; but the case is not so. Nothing, in any ramification of the general law of love, is required that is not conducive to happiness, and nothing is forbidden that is not mischievous, either in itself or in its results. All the precepts are evidently way-marks of peace, and guides to well-being.

(2). Look, in the second place, at the recompenses of God's government.

Dwell on the character of the recompense. Ponder that passage in the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans to which I have more than once referred: God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life . . . glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good." Here is to be no unrecompensed effort, no toil without its reward. And what a reward! "Glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good." What a vast recompense must that be which is fitly expressed in glowing terms like these, the full import of which assuredly cannot be known! It is a recompense calling forth some of the highest emotions of God's own bosom, and conferring on those who are obedient the sublimest joys which creatures can know. Sceptres and crowns, in comparison with it, are less than nothing and vanity.

Or look at the connexion between the recompense and the requirement. See how the recompense has an adaptation to the powers to which it appeals. The rule of the system is, to render "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life." This language implies that it is of the nature of man to aspire after immortal glory and honour. There is an apprehension of them within him, and an impulse is derivable from this apprehension adapted to the moving of his most energetic powers. It belongs to him to seek them as the hope and destiny of his being; and, in response to this aspiration, the government of God presents the prize to his view. The attainment of them, also, requires nothing but a natural, that is to say, a happy, use of his powers. No constraint is applied to them. "Consider your ways," says God; no more. He takes upon himself the responsibility of making the world around such as to present apt and adequate stimulants; and, if man will only bethink himself, and render to

each aspect of things its due regard, he is secure, not only of well-being, but of reward. As it is the winning of wretchedness that is alien to the impulses of man's nature, so it is the commission of sin that does violence to his active powers.

More especially ponder the restriction placed by God's government of man on the contingencies of evil. It does not appear to be a necessary incident to the existence of an intelligent being that he should be subjected to a system of government by persuasion, or addressed by precept and motive with a view to future reward. Concerning intelligent beings of the angelic race (of whom, it is true, we do not know much) we have no intimation that such a method was ever pursued. We do not hear of any term of probation allotted to them. Their being seems to be a uniform continuity, and, so far as we know, of the same nature from first to last; happy, if holy, doubtless, if unholy, wretched. It would seem that, to all eternity, if an angel sin, he is liable to divine wrath, and, if he be holy, entitled to divine approval, these issues constituting, as it were, an immediate heaven and hell, and not a suspended or remote one. In the case of man a widely different arrangement obtains. His existence is divided into two parts, the one in time, the other in eternity; and these two parts are of a character strikingly dissimilar, the former being a term of probation, the latter of retribution. In this world man is under rule and discipline, with recompense in prospect; in the world to come his trial ceases, and, in a fixed character and position, he receives due reward. Now the term of human probation is brief. Here, for a few years, we are required to render obedience, and to give consideration to motives; but let a man endure the trial well, and with life his peril terminates. There is no more probation. The holy character so far preserved is thenceforth fixed, and throughout all eternity remains. His whole future is glory, and honour, and joy. This is assuredly a benign arrangement. By it the contingencies of evil are shut up within a small space, and a brief trial made introductory to an endless and unchangeable felicity.

Such are the proofs which occur to me, in support of the general affirmation that God's government of man tends to his happiness, and I hold them to be amply sufficient to establish it; but not to all do these proofs carry conviction.

We hear on every side complaints of God's government. Men murmur that it forbids many pleasures, and creates many sorrows. Without this, they say, there had been no hell. It is denounced, also, as a restraint upon human liberty. Had there been no government instituted by our Maker, it is alleged, we might have been at our ease, self-indulgent and happy.

II. Let us hearken to these murmurers, and endeavour to weigh their complaints in the balances of truth. This will constitute the second part of our discourse.

If it be so that God's government of man is not conducive to happiness, I ask wherein? The response indicates three sources of displeasure. The government of God is a restraint upon liberty; it generates suffering; it forbids enjoyment.

1. First, it is alleged that the government of God restrains liberty. Apparently it does so. It does, as men say, hem them in with precepts, both positive and negative, meeting them at every turn. I may observe, however, in passing, that this is but a very unfair and partial view of God's law, which is rather to be regarded in its root than in its branches; not so much in its specific injunctions or prohibitions, as in that great general precept which enjoins supreme love to God, and proportionate love to our neighbour. In this light look at it. Does it really restrain liberty? If it does, what is liberty? Or what is that which is claimed under this name on behalf of man? Is it allowance to do, uncontrolled, whatsoever man pleases? I reply, then, that this is liberty in a sense in which it belongs to no created being. In that sense liberty belongs to God, because his existence is his own; it cannot belong to any creature, because no creature's existence is his own. It is given him by another, and to another its regulation belongs. Thus man, in common with every created intelligent being, has his liberty bounded by obligation. He holds a relation to God as the author of his being, and out of this relation springs, necessarily and inevitably, an obligation which he cannot evade.

Of man's real liberty a very different view is to be taken. It does not consist in the absence of obligation, but in the normal or regular action of all his faculties—the understanding, the affections, the conscience, the will—in their due relation to one another. Man's liberty consists in the harmonious operation of all his powers, and more especially of

his passions and his conscience. That in which all his passions can agree, in which every one of them shall have its full gratification, and in which the gratification of all shall be combined with the approbation of the moral sense, affords man genuine liberty. It is a condition in which no part of his nature complains. Bondage is experienced by man when any one of his powers, or any class of his powers, overrides another. When man's passions trample on his conscience there is bondage; when one of man's passions thwarts another there is bondage; but the harmonious action of all his powers is freedom.

I have said that obligation is essentially characteristic of man's nature, and cannot be got rid of; I now observe, further, that the boundary which thus prescribes limits to man's action is not generated by God's government. It would have existed although he had never established a government. It belongs essentially to man's nature as a creature. God, in instituting a government, merely takes up a primary and previously existing obligation, and makes it the groundwork and basis of his administration. He finds man at once capable of voluntary obedience, and under obligation to render it; and to these facts he simply adds three elements—an assertion of his authority, a communication of his will, and a declaration of recompense. The complaint of the limitation of man's liberty, consequently, is not to be brought against the government of God, which is not the limiting power; but it lies, if at all, against the essential nature of things, and the fact that man is only a creature. If that be a hardship, undoubtedly man has cause of complaint; but he must bear it, complain as he may.

2. Secondly, it is alleged that God's government generates suffering. Without this, we are told, there had been no hell. Undoubtedly, suffering, awful and endless suffering, arises under God's government—that, as a fact, must be admitted; but several observations may be made upon it.

(1). There is no causeless suffering; no suffering for its own sake, nor any generated but by a fitting cause, and in a righteous manner. There is no suffering without sin, and all suffering is in due proportion to sin. There is no suffering to the holy. Now it is no discredit to God's government that under it suffering exists in connexion with sin; on the contrary, it would be a dishonour to it if there were sin without suffering.

(2). There is no inevitable suffering, none which may not be escaped. Suffering is only conditional, or incurred in the event of sinning. It is optional, therefore, whether you suffer or not. If you will be holy you shall encounter no suffering. A holy life under God's government will incur none of its penalties.

(3). There is no unbalanced suffering. If there be suffering under the government of God, there is also joy, and joy placed within the reach of all. The two issues, "glory, honour, and immortality," and "indignation and wrath," are placed alike before us, with equal facility for our hands to grasp either the one or the other.

(4). There is no additional suffering. The suffering which arises under God's government would accrue if there were no such government. For, as the obligation which defines human liberty is not generated by the government of God, but existed antecedently to it, so the connexion between sin and misery is not created by the government of God, but existed antecedently to it. It is in the nature of things that sin and misery go together. They cannot be divided.

Sin is productive of misery in two ways, and the observation I have now made is applicable to them both.

Sin is productive of misery by its own recoil upon man's heart. It wakes the thunders of conscience, the voice of condemnation from the uncorrupted judge within. It pollutes the passions, distracts them, disorders them, and causes them to be productive of misery—of chagrin, self-reproach, remorse, despair. And the wretchedness thus resulting to man in his own heart from the reflex action of the iniquities that he commits, is not owing to the government of God. It springs from the nature of things, and will be felt under any circumstances. It should be observed, however, that God's government has not taken up this source of sorrow, since it is not made a part of the punishment of sin.

Sin is further productive of misery by entailing God's disapprobation on the sinner. This also arises from the nature of things; and, although God in his government does adopt this element for the purpose of retribution, he does not create it. A keen sensibility to his displeasure belongs essentially to the nature of man, quite apart from the question of government. His approbation follows well-doing in every intelligent creature, with or without government;

his disapprobation follows evil-doing in every intelligent creature, with or without government. It cannot be otherwise. The holiness and righteousness of God necessitate such a result, and no modification of his ways can be charged with the origination of it. So that, here again, if there be any complaint at all, it is against the nature of things that it must lie, and not against the government of God. As no new restraint is imposed upon man's liberty, so no new distress is invented as a punishment for man's sin. God, as he finds man under obligation, so he finds him susceptible both of joy and sorrow under the exercise of his approbation or disapprobation; and he takes up these previously existing elements, and weaves them into a system of government. He does nothing more. The blame, if any, lies, not upon the government of God, but upon those essential conditions of human existence which were antecedent to it, and which cannot be altered. He that frets against them strives with his Maker, and he cannot but be foiled in so presumptuous a strife. "Nay, but, O man," says the apostle, "who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans ix. 20). "He that reproveth God, let him answer it" (Job xl. 2).

3. Thirdly, it is alleged that God's government of man forbids enjoyment. Apparently, to some extent it does so. In some of those things which it condemns men take much pleasure. But what are the kinds of enjoyment that God's law restrains? It prohibits no holy pleasures. It forbids none but the pleasures of sin. Now, it is no reproach to the law of God to deny to us the pleasures of sin. Would it elevate that law in the estimation even of a wicked man's conscience, if it sanctioned them? I do not know but that, in this case, a wicked man would be among the first to cast a reproach upon his Maker, and say, "Thou art as vile as I." That God's law, however, is not unfriendly to enjoyment as such, must be evident from the sanction which it gives to the highest and the noblest pleasures. For no nobler pleasures are to be conceived than those derived from the love of God in its various exercises, and the proportionate love of our fellow-creatures. And what is the reason that the elevated joys thus presented to men afford no pleasure? The corruption of man's heart, is the only reply. And is the govern-

ment of God to be blamed for the corruption of man's heart? Is it because man has made himself so much like a beast and a devil that nothing holy can delight him, that complaint is to be raised against the holy and spotless law? In that case, the more wicked a man might become the more just would be his reproaches against the rule of right and love. I may go further than this, however, and say, that the pleasures which God's law forbids are not of the nature of real happiness. Nothing is more certain, or more palpable, than that there are within our reach many gratifications which are not conducive to our welfare. Such, for example, are ill-ordered indulgences of the appetites and passions, which, to minister to our real happiness, require to be under a wise restraint. Now it is nothing more than a wise restraint of this kind that the law of God imposes on us. It forbids only that which would make us miserable, and is, therefore, not less kind than wise. Of every indulgence it restrains we may say, in language familiar to us,

“'Tis but a drop of flattering sweet,
And dashed with bitter bowls.”

But suppose now that God, in deference to these complainers, should take them at their word, and say—“Since you think my government does not tend to your happiness, I will abandon it, and there shall be nothing left but the essential nature of things, which I cannot alter.” What have we then? We have limitation of man's liberty by obligations resulting from his relation to his Maker, just as now; we have happiness and misery connected with holiness and sin respectively, just as now; and, instead of having these elements wrought into a system of persuasive government, giving us, on the one hand, a brief period of probation, and, on the other, an eternity of fixed holiness and happiness, we have them spread uniformly throughout our whole being. The approbation or disapprobation of God is not then postponed, as is the case now, till the day of judgment, but is brought down at once upon every heart (as it is, I presume, upon the angels), making an instant heaven and hell instead of a future one, and giving to an eternal existence the same liabilities to sin and suffering which God has now shut up within the short space of human life. I ask the sinner, Are you any better off now? If you cannot keep God's law for

a few years, could you be holy for ever? And if you cannot bear his approbation and disapprobation as he has incorporated them into a benign government, could you endure them as they should come flashing instantly upon your soul, in an immediate recompense for holiness or sin?

I have thus presented to you a series of proofs that God's government of man is benign, and shown how futile are the complaints alleged against this view of it.

In conclusion, let us remark how honourable this is to God. He has established over man a system of government by persuasion, and has wrought into it the various elements of obligation and susceptibility which he found in the nature of things; but, while forming a government in which he himself was to be supreme Lord, and by which his own glory was to be illustrated, he has yet had in view his creature's happiness. He has given us such a law, set before us such recompenses, and arranged all things in such a manner, as most to promote our well-being. This is worthy of God. There is nothing herein contrary to his benevolence, nothing adverse to his glorious emotional nature, the love of the right, the beautiful, and the blest. It was a critical problem. Any being but the infinitely wise and good might conceivably have failed, either by overstraining the exercise of authority, or by exaggerating the evil and the punishment of sin; but, in all respects, the ever-blessed God has acted like himself. He has constituted a government, not only equitable and just, but, even to man's own vision, demonstrably benign.

Let us remark, also, how persuasive this should be to man. A yoke, indeed, is placed upon us; but one at once so just and so easy why should we refuse to wear? Man's proud heart, it is true, dislikes it. Perhaps some of you, dear hearers, are conscious that you resent it. O resent it not! "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good." All the authority of precept, all the pressure of motive, and all the strictness of recompense, by which you are displeased, constitute but so many way-marks along the path that leads you to "glory, honour, and immortality."

But, alas! you are already a sinner. The law of God you have broken, and trampled under your feet. You have done this under the pretext that, if not unjust, it was unkind. Deeply ought you to be ashamed of yourself. A government adapted and designed for your happiness you have

dishonoured, and thereby you have dishonoured yourself likewise. It is a fault for which there is neither justification nor excuse; and, when you stand before your Maker in judgment, you will be covered with shame and confusion of faces. As the only means of vindicating the honour of his law in your case, he must carry out respecting you the denunciation of his wrath, the sentence of "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." And yet bethink yourself. There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared. Even the dishonour of his holy law by you he will overlook, having devised a method of doing it honour in the person and by the death of his Son. Yes, he has found a ransom, a Saviour; one in whose life and death the law has been "made honourable," and has regained its glory. If you will accept it, there is expiation for your guilt, forgiveness for your transgression. Come, you who have despised and trampled on the law, will you prize and embrace the Gospel? You have defied wrath, will you submit to mercy? The commands adapted to your happiness you have disregarded, and they can make you happy no longer; but the promises of the Gospel bring peace to you again. Will you reject the glad tidings, the "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"? O! breakers of God's law, will you be despisers of his grace? Or will you not rather come at his call who saith, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out"?

HYMN.

CAN thy dominion be unkind,
 Thou God of righteousness?
 What in thy rule can creatures find
 But matter for thy praise?

Thy precepts mark the only road,
 Of bliss to mortals shown;
 While the vast recompense bestowed
 Is an immortal crown.

No new restraint thy will has laid
 On human liberty;
 No new distress thy hand has made
 Thy law to magnify.

Happy if we had sought the good,
 The heavenly prize had won!
 But thanks for pardon by the blood
 Of God's beloved Son!

LECTURE VIII.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS OBJECT: OR, THE INSTRUMENT OF HUMAN PROBATION.

“To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.”—*Deuteronomy* viii. 2.

WE have found that the government which God has instituted over man has a most grave and serious aspect towards him; subjecting him to an authority which he may not resist, and making him liable to solemn, and even fearful, issues, from which he cannot escape. But it is not towards him only that the aspect of this system is grave. It involves a large expenditure of divine resources, and the construction of an extensive and elaborate machinery. God has employed infinite wisdom in devising it, and his whole nature is continually occupied with its administration. So that if, on the one hand, man, conscious that he is the subject of a government, in astonishment may ask, “What is about to be done with me?” it would not be unnatural to conceive of God, on the other hand, as, in the contemplation of his government, proposing to himself the question, “What is it that I mean to do?” The tendency of this system we had before us last Lord’s day evening, and we found reason to pronounce it benign; let us now proceed to consider its OBJECT. Shall we find this also worthy of its Author?

Of the object of God’s government of man a twofold view may be taken: we may look at it, in the first place, as it relates to God; and, in the second place, as it relates to man. The object of God’s government as it relates to himself will form the subject of our next discourse; on the present occasion I take up the latter of these topics, and direct your attention to the object of God’s government as it relates to man. In the treatment of this theme my aim will be, in the first place, to ascertain what the object of God’s government really is, and, in the second place, to show its divine excellence and glory.

I. In the first place, I shall endeavour to ascertain what the object of God’s government really is. In other words, I

ask this question, What, in respect to man, does God mean to effect by it?

Now it would, of course, be most satisfactory if, in relation to this as to all other topics, one could find declarations from God's own mouth answering our inquiries; but I do not know that, upon this occasion, I can either have for myself, or present to you, this satisfaction. The passage which I have read evidently does not refer to it, nor has one directly relating to it occurred to my mind. We must judge, therefore, of the subject which thus comes before us inferentially; not very much wondering, in truth, that there is no direct instruction in Scripture respecting it, since it is rather theoretical than practical, while the instructions given to us in Scripture are rather practical than theoretical. We are not, however, without grounds of judgment. Generally speaking, we may form conclusions respecting the object of any system if, in the first place, we know the character of its author; if, in the second place, we can examine the mechanism of which it consists; and if, in the third place, we can explore the effects which it produces. With these three avenues of inquiry open to us, we can in any case ascertain much, and all of them are to a considerable extent open to us with respect to God's government of man. We can see the effects which it produces, we can examine the mechanism by which it works, and we can learn something of the character of its Author. Our business, consequently, will be to apply the tests thus provided to whatever may be hypothetically assigned as the object of God's government of man, and to see which, or whether any, of them will fulfil the conditions requisite to its truth. It is after some such method as this that philosophers theorize in respect of the natural sciences. In the first instance they accumulate facts; then, one idea and another being suggested as affording a probable explanation of the facts, trial is made, and that which will embrace them all is accepted as the true solution. In like manner, we have now three conditions before us with which any satisfactory doctrine respecting the object of God's government of man must agree; and the one that agrees with these will not be far from the truth.

The plan which I have proposed will not entangle us in large or abstruse speculations. It may be observed generally, that there are only two objects which can with any plausi-

bility be assigned to God's government in relation to man; the object is either the promotion of his happiness, or the accomplishment of his probation. Our inquiry, therefore, will be simply this: Which of these suppositions will best endure the application of the necessary tests?

1. The first hypothesis to be examined is, that the object of God's government of man is the promotion of his happiness. Some plausible things are said in advocacy of this sentiment, and considerable tenacity is shown in upholding it. Let us try this theory, then, by the three tests which are in our hands.

(1). To take them in the inverse order to that in which I have mentioned them, let us begin with an examination of the results. Is the happiness of man in point of fact produced by God's government? It is but too painfully evident that this question must be answered in the negative. God's government has not in fact been productive of happiness to man, but, on the contrary, of a vast amount of misery. The misery has resulted, it is true, from man's iniquity, and not from the natural, still less from the necessary, tendency of the system itself; but still it is under the government of God that it has occurred. Multitudes of human beings have become sinners, and are suffering, and will have to suffer everlastingly, the punishment due to their fault. So that, if man's happiness is supposed to be the object of God's government, then it must be admitted that the scheme is a manifest and melancholy failure, since that object has not been attained by it. It is hard, however, to come to the conclusion that God's government of man is a failure. It is not like him who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," to aim at an object and to come short of it. We cannot believe, indeed, that such an issue has been arrived at; we believe, rather, that the object of God in the government of man includes under it the origination of sin and suffering.

(2). In the second place, let us appeal to the mechanism of God's government. Is the promotion of the happiness of man the object of its several arrangements? I have already affirmed, and endeavoured to maintain the affirmation, that the *tendency* of God's government is benevolent—that is to say, that it is so ordered as to make man happy if he will be obedient to it; but it would be going further than this, and, indeed, much too far, to assert that the government of God

had the happiness of man for its *object*. To make good such a view, it would be necessary that its arrangements should be, not conditionally merely, but absolutely conducive to this end, and that all risks of disappointment should be excluded. The mechanism of God's government, however, is certainly not of this kind. It is adapted to produce either happiness or misery, according to man's conduct; to make him happy if he will be obedient, but, if he will not be obedient, to render him miserable. It cannot be said, therefore, that its object is man's happiness, since, however kindly this may have been consulted in the original design, it is, in the development of the system, evidently made subordinate to the production of some other and higher end.

(3). In the third place, let us examine this suggestion by a reference to the character of God. Here it is supposed that, if anywhere, an argument is to be found in its favour. "God is love," we are reminded, and it cannot be conceived that a being who is "love" would institute a system of government over man of which the happiness of man was not the object.

In considering the position thus taken, it is, of course, to be admitted that "God is love;" but it is obvious to remark, that this blessed and glorious declaration is quoted in this argument with a stress which it will not bear. It is used as if to show that love is the exclusive, or, at all events, the predominant attribute of the divine character. The case, however, is not so. It may well be deemed marvellous, indeed, that those who insist on the love of God should forget that he is holy also, and that he is declared to be holy by the same authority which declares him to be kind. The undoubted truth that "God is love," consequently, proves nothing in this argument. The object of which we are in search must be as consistent with his holiness as with his benevolence.

To this it may be added, that, as love is not the exclusive attribute of God, so neither has it a predominance in his character. In treating on a former occasion* of the emotional nature of the Divine Being, I exhibited it as consisting of three leading elements, the love of the right, the beautiful,

* I beg the reader's permission here to refer him to my Lectures on Acquaintance with God, Lect. vi.

and the blest, and described these affections as having an order of priority corresponding with this statement of them. According to this view, God is first holy, then benevolent; his love of the right is prior to his love of the blest. The ruling power, therefore, in the divine mind (if so we must speak) is not his benevolence, but his holiness.

The question may be thus stated. To require that the happiness of man should be the absolute object of God's dispensation towards him, would be to require one of two things; either that God should cause man's happiness to be produced by any kind of conduct he might pursue, however wicked, or that he should so arrange the elements of the system as to render the commission of sin impossible. If God were to adopt the former of these alternatives, and make men happy however wicked they might be, it would be a course to be regarded with lamentation and horror, an absolute sacrifice of all title to reverence and honour; and, if he were to adopt the latter alternative, and pursue a plan that should render the commission of sin impossible, it would amount to the abandonment of the most glorious portion of his works. Neither the weakness of one alternative, nor the wickedness of the other, can for a moment be imputed to our Maker.

We have thus applied our three tests to the supposition that the object of God's government is the happiness of man, and we find that it will not bear the trial; neither the character of God, nor the mechanism employed, nor the result produced, affords it sanction. Whatever the object of God's government of man may be, this it certainly is not.

2. I take up, then, the second suggestion, namely, that the object of God's government of man is his probation. To accommodate the words of the text, it may perhaps be said to man, God rules thee, O man, "to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." Is the object of God's government of man, then, the probation of human character? With this question before our eyes, let us repeat the process that we have gone through, and try this suggestion by the three tests which we have already employed.

(1). In the first place, as to the results. Will the idea that the object of God's government of man is his probation embrace and explain them? This question it is not too

much to answer at once in the affirmative. The commandments of God, and the motives applied to enforce them, do bring out what is in man's heart, in whatever form it may present itself. If he be obedient, if he be disobedient; if he be rewarded, if he be punished; if he be happy, if he be miserable;—whatever be the issues, the government of God has done this work. It has tested every man, brought out his hidden preferences, made manifest his ruling passion, and detected the most secret bias of his heart. It has given man a scope for development, an opportunity for acting himself out; and, whatever else may be the result, under it this at least is in every case accomplished. The probation of man, therefore, is an object which agrees with our first test; namely, it explains the facts. It is an object effected, whatsoever the other issues may be, alike with respect to the righteous and the wicked.

(2). Let us try this suggestion, then, by the second test, and compare it with the mechanism of God's government. We found that this was not adapted absolutely to secure man's happiness, because it contemplated the alternative of disobedience, and pronounced punishment in that event; but it is absolutely adapted to prove man's heart, to probe and to search it. It presents authority to command, appeals to duty, gratitude, and interest, to persuade, and an equitable retribution to complete the process. Man's heart does not know how to steel itself against such methods. They are adapted most effectually to make him show what he is, by the manner in which he either repels or accepts them. And there is nothing in the mechanism that does not help forward this design. To it all is obviously and directly subservient. It is the one thing upon which every part has its bearing. The suggestion now before us, therefore, corresponds with our second test. It not only embraces all the facts, but it accords with the machinery employed.

(3). Let us now look at this scheme as it stands related to the character of God, our third and remaining test. We know God to be a being possessing an infinite emotional nature of love—the love of the right, the beautiful, and the blest. With respect to a government by persuasion, then, the question is this: Is it likely that, with its inseparable hazard of sin and misery, God will adopt such a system? Without professing to go deeper into the mysteries of the

divine nature than, under the guidance of Holy Writ, we may, this may be said, that such a system presents to God a new and a varied mode of manifesting his own attributes. Now that is the grand aim and object of all his works. For that he created this and other worlds; for that he made the earth and skies, with their multifarious wonders. All modes of being are produced for the sake of manifesting himself; and each one has this beauty in his eyes, that it is a manifestation of himself in some respect new and diverse. So government by persuasion is a new manifestation of himself, and in this respect it has the same kind of beauty in his eyes that his other works possess. There is the same reason to suppose that God would adopt a plan of this kind, as to suppose that he would adopt any other plan discovered in any or all the works of his hands.

And this view may be confirmed by remarking, that a manifestation of God after this manner, while new and different from all existing before, is in entire harmony with all other and antecedent displays of himself. Although peculiar, and diverse from all other divine operations, it is not incongruous with any of them. It is additional, not inconsistent. If a government by persuasion had necessarily involved the exhibition of feebleness or folly, of unrighteousness or unkindness, the regard of God for his own glory would assuredly have prohibited it; but this is not the case. God's government by persuasion harmonizes with all that he is, while it shows him to be in some respects what nothing else declares. So that, while a new mode of manifesting himself engages his regard, there appears no drawback or hindrance to its adoption. No attribute is either dishonoured or obscured by it.

We thus see that the supposition that the object of God's government is the probation of human character corresponds with all our tests; it embraces all the results, gives play to all the mechanism, and is wholly congruous with the character of God. I set it down, therefore, as a thing proved, although not in so many words to be found in Scripture. In my mind it has a place among fundamental truths solidly laid.

I add one remark collateral to this argument, namely, that this is not the only, nor the first, instance in which God has acted on the principle now stated. A smaller dispensation

antecedent to this (I refer to the treatment of our first parents in Eden) appears to have been of a probationary character. The prohibition of the tree of knowledge constituted an experiment instituted for the trial of man; a system of government by persuasion, restricted, indeed, within one single command and one grand issue, but still in its nature probationary. And God who has done this once, and so shown his approbation of the principle, is the more likely to have done it again.

II. Having, in this first part of our discourse, endeavoured to ascertain what the object of God's government of man is, and come to the conclusion that it is the probation of human character, I now proceed, in the second place, to the inquiry whether this may be regarded as an object excellent in itself, and worthy of God. To this question my answer will be threefold.

1. In the first place, I observe, that it is at least evident that God thinks so, for, if he had not thought so, he would not have adopted it. Ere he acts in any manner he asks whether it is conducive to his glory, and he determines this question in every case with a profound and infinite wisdom, which entitles his conclusion to the most reverential regard. Who shall undertake to say that a course is not worthy of God, of which he has practically proclaimed a contrary judgment? In the particular case before us, moreover, God has constructed an elaborate machinery, and has run many risks (so to speak) to accomplish his object. What infinite interests are at stake! What profound wisdom has been engaged! What questions of eternal rectitude are involved! What affecting motives are brought into bearing! What tremendous issues of glory and shame are generated! Did God trifle with an innumerable multitude of immortal souls, with an eternal heaven and an eternal hell? O no! He never ran such a risk but for the sake of an object which he deemed in the highest degree worthy of his name.

2. Let us, however, in the second place, look more closely at the object itself, and see if there be not reasons which will induce us to concur in God's judgment, even according to the very partial and contracted view that we may be able to take of it.

This government of persuasion is, in several respects, a wonderful thing.

Worthy of admiration, first, is the constitution of a creature susceptible of such government. The question, How is it conceivable that God can have brought into being a creature capable of an independent activity, leads to a mystery of the profoundest kind. God himself pervades all things, and yet he contrives by some means, no one can tell how, to detach from himself a little sphere of activity, into which he puts a creature made by his own hand, and, as it were, with this condition, "In that province you are a god. I withdraw from you. I act everywhere else; you act there. I shall see what you do; I shall direct you what to do; I shall reward or punish you for what you do; but I withdraw my immediate power from you, and leave you to act out your impulses freely." The constitution of a being of this kind is, as I conceive it, the very marvel of all God's created works, subject only to one exception, the person of our incarnate Lord, in which there is the still greater mystery, the blending of the creature with the Creator. Next to this, God's noblest labour, and inferior only to it, I conceive the constitution of a being capable of independent action to be the most wonderful and beautiful thing in all God's works. It was to his glory to be able to do it. No one else could have done it. You may say so much, indeed, of all creation, but pre-eminently and emphatically of this. When the idea presented itself to him of creating such a being, I do not wonder for a moment that he embraced it; and in this sentiment of concurrence I feel my likeness to God, and his likeness to me.

In the second place, I think it wonderful, and glorious to God, that, having constituted a creature capable of independent action, he should have ventured upon subjecting him to a trial. When we succeed in inventing or constructing something unusually beautiful or delicate, we commonly preserve it with extreme care, as by putting a shade over it, in which it may be admired while it is sheltered from exposure. God did not do so with man. Here is a creature endowed with power of independent action, a gem of divine art, but, notwithstanding the exquisite delicacy of its machinery, its Maker subjects it to trial: as if he had said, "I have made you to distinguish between good and evil, and I will see which you will choose. I will try you by appeals which will bring out your very heart." What! at all hazards of sin and misery? Yes, at all hazards. Now I think there was

(I speak with reverence) a daring in that to which I may emphatically apply the epithet divine. It is a stand which we may conceive none but God ever would have taken, and yet it is a stand which his glory required. For, if one constructs a machine, and is obliged from its delicacy to withhold it from motion, what is the world the better? And, if this creature gifted with independence could not bear being set in action, it was the less to the honour of his Maker to have formed him.

In the third place, I take it to have been a wonderful act, and to the glory of God, to devise suitable conditions for such a trial. It must have been a problem of surpassing difficulty (I speak as a man) to determine with perfect wisdom and equity all the arrangements of such a process, from the precept to the retribution. To present truth of various forms clearly and adequately to the intellect; to adapt motives of various kinds, both in nature and in force, to the affections; to surround us with persuasive elements arranged in such a manner that he should be able to resolve all his requirements into the single demand, "Consider your ways;" and to frame a scheme of retribution all but infinitely flexible, ample in all cases and yet not exceeding in any an equitable recompense; what is all this but work for an infinite mind, and full employ for all the attributes of Deity? How many delicate points of right to be secured! How many liabilities to excess or defect to be avoided! To be strictly just, without being in any degree unkind; to be tenderly benign, without the smallest violation of equity; to demand with rigour, yet to ask neither more nor less than is due; to deal with motives of inconceivable magnificence, and yet to leave to the agent perfect freedom! There are wonders in all that God has done. There are wonders in every stone; there are more wonders in every plant; there are more wonders in every animated creature; but there are more wonders than all these in the structure of man, and in the arrangements of God's government concerning him.

Fourthly, I think it wonderful, and to God's glory, that he should actually administer such a government. The administration of government is not in any case easy, but under no circumstances is it so complex and difficult as in God's government of man. The knowledge of the facts is matter for an infinite understanding, the estimate of the

motives for a boundless sagacity, and the allotment of the recompenses for a most sensitive equity. To devise and establish a government of persuasion over man's heart might be one thing, and effectively to administer it quite another. That God should actually administer it in a way of unsullied righteousness, so as to leave no virtue unrewarded and no sin unpunished; so as never to fail, either in punishment or reward, of rendering to every one his exact due; so as to throw the blame of sin and punishment, if these should result, upon the sinner, and yet to take no unfair advantage; so as to leave to his enemies no ground of complaint, and no cause of lamentation to his friends—is not this divinely-glorious? The character of a judge who, through a long course of years, conducts judicial proceedings in a manner irreproachable, stands among the highest in human estimation: how supremely-glorious and beautiful shall be the character of the Judge of all the earth!

3. Considerations like these have a tendency, I think, to satisfy us that the probation of human character was an object eminently worthy of God. In further illustration of the subject, I refer, in the third place, to some aspects of the scheme out of which impediments to its adoption may be conceived likely to arise.

It is plain that serious hazards are involved in God's government. It is a scheme that has to do with a being capable of independent action; it addresses to him commandments which he may or may not obey, and motives to which he may or may not yield. Let us suppose that some of the beings placed under this system prove disobedient. What a melancholy scene will then be presented! A poor, insignificant creature swelling into pride and rebellion, trampling under his feet the laws of a righteous Ruler, and throwing on his Maker insult and shame. What a fearful thing will that be! Will it be no dishonour to God to have rebellion break out in his dominions? The question is a grave one, but it may be fearlessly answered. And the answer is, No: if only the rebellion be fitly punished. The best of sovereigns is not secure from an outbreak of treason, but his honour may be amply vindicated by the arrest and condemnation of the traitor. To let crime go unpunished is a dishonour to a government; but one that always and duly punishes offences suffers no shame from them, whatever may

be their nature or amount. In like manner transgression against God, although deeply to be deplored, and deeply dishonourable to the transgressor, leaves no stain on his character or that of his government, his arrangements fully providing for the vindication of both by the avenging of iniquity.

Punishment, however, ensues. The fact is undoubtedly a melancholy one; but is it not also dishonour to a benevolent ruler to have penal suffering everlastingly in his dominion? Again I admit that the question is a grave one, but again I say that it may be fearlessly answered. And the answer is, No: if only the punishment be just. An unjust punishment would dishonour a ruler—a punishment, undeserved, ill adapted, or excessive. I believe that, if God were to punish sinners by placing them in fire, it would dishonour him, because I see no connexion in equity between such a punishment and the offence committed; but I do not believe that subjecting men to his displeasure for sinning against him would do so, because the punishment is equitably related to the sin. The mere fact of the infliction of punishment dishonours no ruler. As a judicial act it is not incompatible with benevolence, which is a personal virtue; while it is imperatively required at once by the well-being of society, and the uprightness of the judge. Even earthly judges do not come down from the seat of judgment with shame, when they have passed sentence upon criminals convicted before them; nor can we conceive of dishonour arising from the infliction of righteous penalties by the universal Judge.

Let us suppose, however, an extreme case. Let us suppose that the whole human race should break the law of God, and by disobedience involve themselves in ruin; will not an entire world of rebels, all guilty and undone, be to God's dishonour? Again I admit that the question is a grave one, and again I say that it may be fearlessly answered. And the answer is, No: if only the conditions of his government have been equitable. If, indeed, they have not been so—if he has exacted too much, if he has exercised unrighteous judgment, or punished with excessive severity, this will be to his dishonour; but, under just conditions, no reproach could attach to God although the entire world were disobedient and undone, and although not a single individual of mankind ever yielded the obedience called for, or reaped

its reward. That which is infinitely just must always be entitled to admiration, and can never lose any of its lustre by the injustice of which it may be the occasion.

I make, however, in connexion with this last supposition, one additional remark, namely, that at this point our subject links itself with beings beyond the race of human kind. The probation of man has not been left absolutely to the decision of man. An enemy has interfered with it. An evil spirit tempted our first parent. An evil spirit has tempted his posterity, and tempts us. God has been pleased to allow in this part of his dominion an inroad of Satanic malignity, which, while it does not violate the rectitude of his probationary system, brings into it an extrinsic element with which he will have to deal seriously hereafter; in the meantime, the fact that the entire race of man violate God's law and expose themselves to its penalty, is owing, not to man only, though man is equitably punished for it, but to man under the influence of malign temptation. Against this desperate effort of Satanic policy God will vindicate himself in his own way. "For this purpose," the apostle John declares, "the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8); and a method which is directed to "destroy the works of the devil" cannot but be full of hope for transgressing and ruined man. I cannot now go further into this subject: I only mention it here to show that God's government of man links itself, both with other beings, and with a wider dispensation, the aspect of which may serve to mitigate the imminent results of human rebellion.

I have thus endeavoured to show that the probation of man is, for God's persuasive government of him, an object, not only sufficiently, but eminently, glorious.

The general sentiment with which our inquiry may be concluded is one of satisfaction and acquiescence. Since it was God's will thus to engage himself in an experiment on an intelligent being whom he had fitted for the purpose, we have only to say, "Even so: let the Lord do his pleasure." Even to our limited view, such a course exhibits him in no light repulsive, or unamiable. Here, as everywhere, he displays his love of the right, the beautiful, and the blest.

More particularly it may be remarked, not only that God has in the government of mankind an object worthy of

himself, but that he carries out this object in a manner altogether independent and secure. Do what you please with God's government—either break his commandments or keep them, either love him or hate him—he still effects his object, easily and perfectly. He brings out what is in your heart. He so surrounds you with precepts and motives that you actually make your choice of good or evil, and he thus discovers “whether you will keep his commandments, or no.” Now that is all that God intended to do. That was his object, and he effects it either in defiance of you or with your help, whichever you please. Thus, in a manner like a God, he works his sovereign and righteous will, and brings forth his glory even from the most perverse workings of an alienated and rebellious heart.

While, however, what we do is of no consequence to God—it has no power to frustrate his purpose—it is of infinite importance to ourselves; because, according to the developments of our character which take place, so will be our future doom. He will render to every man according to his works. Now, tell me, dear hearer, by one exercise of practical thoughtfulness, what is it that God by his government has brought out of your heart? He has done much to prove you; what has he learnt by it? What have you shown him? Ah! what you have shown him is that you love yourself, the world, and sin, rather than your Maker. He has brought out of your heart an amount of selfishness, pollution, and pride, which you would never have believed to be there had he not discovered it to you. And what is to be the issue of this display? It goes forward to the judgment-seat. There you will see that too faithful portrait of yourself, and you will stand confounded at the sight. You will say, “So I lived, and just is my doom.” O! were it not better to make confession of your sin with penitence and shame at a throne of grace, where all may be forgiven? Were it not better to humble yourself under that mighty hand which, mighty as it is, is now merciful? Were it not better to come to the fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness, and to hearken to the voice that saith, “Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”? (Isaiah i. 18.)

HYMN.

To probe this treacherous heart of mine,
And search its secret chambers through,
Words of authority divine
Pursue me wheresoe'er I go.

What ruling love is there concealed,
What choice of good or ill is made,
By trial shall be all revealed,
And before gathered worlds displayed.

'Tis nought to thee, all-righteous One,
Whether the good or ill we choose;
For thy heart-searching work is done,
If we obey thee, or refuse.

What hast thou found within my breast,
But sin and folly, gracious God?
O be my sin with shame confest,
And pardoned through the atoning blood!

LECTURE IX.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS RULE: OR, THE SPHERE OF
DIVINE JUSTICE.

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”—*Genesis* xviii. 25.

IN our survey of God's government of man, we entered last Lord's day evening on the consideration of its object, or of that which God intended to effect by it. We found that this object presented itself to us in two aspects, the one of them relating to man, and the other to God himself. What was the object of God's government in relation to man we endeavoured in our last Lecture to ascertain, and we concluded that it was his probation; the system being of the nature of a grand experiment, intended to apply tests to human character, and to bring out the secrets of the human heart. We now advance to the other question before us, and ask, What was the object of God in relation to himself?

In reference to this part of our inquiry, the guiding principle is already laid down for us. God does all things,

the Scriptures inform us, for his own glory; in other words, for the manifestation of his own character. The glory of God, I need scarcely observe to you, is twofold; either essential, or manifested. His essential glory belongs to him as he is in himself, and cannot be increased; his manifested glory, or that which is exhibited in his works, is evidently capable of increase without limit. There was a period when none of the glory of God was manifested—that is to say, antecedently to his operations of creative power—for then he existed alone; and, as he has multiplied his works and ways, his glory—that is, his character—has been manifested in continually augmenting degrees. Since, however, the attributes of God are infinite, it is plain that no one operation, or kind of operation, can adequately exhibit them; and hence, while all the works and ways of God have one common and simple object, namely, the manifestation of himself, they are themselves of great number and variety. They are so even as now presented to us; and the probability is, that the works and ways of God as presented to us are a mere fraction of the whole as exhibited throughout the universe.

Every one of God's works has, of course, its specific object, and is intended to glorify him by manifesting some special aspect of his character. Thus "the heavens declare the glory of God," together with all portions of the physical creation. In like manner God's tender mercies, which are over all his works, declare his glory, together with all the kindred operations of his providence. And in like manner, also, the government which it has pleased God to institute over man has its specific function. There is some attribute of God which this, in common with the rest of his works, is intended to exhibit. Our question is, which is it?

It is necessary here to make a general observation. The active energy of God is under the direction of his emotional nature, and is exerted under impulses derived from the essential affections of his being. The emotional nature of God we have already found to consist of three principal elements; holiness, complacency, benevolence—the love of the right, the beautiful, and the happy; and out of one or other of these moving powers God's government of man has sprung.

I. In which of these three the magnificent scheme of

God's government of man has had its origin, is the question to which, in the first place, we shall endeavour to obtain an answer.

Let us here glance for a moment at the machinery which is employed. God has endowed a creature with a power of self-government, and has assigned to him a limited, but appropriate and adequate, sphere of independent action. The intellect of this being he supplies with means of knowledge, and to his heart he gives a lively sensibility to motives on the one hand and to recompenses on the other, to which sensibility he makes adequate, but not excessive, appeals. This is the thing which God does. And, these being the elements of the system which he conducts, he administers it inflexibly, annexing to the course which may be pursued the exact recompense announced. Now, the question raised is this: Has this system sprung out of God's love of the beautiful, his love of the happy, or his love of the right?

I will take up these three topics in their order.

1. First, has God's government of man sprung out of his love of the beautiful?

In answering this question, I will admit that there is much in it from which God's love of the beautiful may be supposed to derive gratification. The very conception of a created being so endowed with a capacity of primary action and self-government, is beautiful. The structure of such a being, his intellectual, sensitive, and conscious mechanism, is beautiful. The assignment of a sphere of independent action, one derived and yet detached from the divine, and allotted to this, as it were, minor deity, is beautiful. All the arrangements by which so delicate and interesting an experiment may be carried out with equity untarnished, are, as skilful adaptations, exquisitely beautiful. And, finally, the result of the experiment if a favourable one may be assumed, a faithful obedience and an eternal reward, is infinitely beautiful. But yet, adapted as this system is to gratify the love of the beautiful, nevertheless in its progress it involves too much of insecurity and danger to be satisfactorily resolved into this affection. It is liable to be marred; and beauty marred no longer yields gratification to the love of the beautiful. It may be productive of sin and of suffering, results from which the sense of beauty recoils, as unwilling to contemplate the ruin which it may not prevent. It may

be said, then, that God's government of man has not sprung out of his love of the beautiful.

2. Secondly, has this system sprung out of God's love of the happy?

In answering this question, also, I admit there is much in God's government of man by which his benevolence might be gratified. Its tendency is benign. It "was ordained to life." It would have made man happy if he would have abided by its precepts; it limited probation to a brief period, and it attached to fidelity a signal reward. But, nevertheless, there is much in the system which prohibits our conceiving of it as arising out of God's love of the happy.

(1). The risks are too great. There is the risk of disobedience, of disobedience aggravated, extended, and universal; and there is the risk of punishment also, deserved, indeed, but unutterably awful. These are risks which it may be conceived pure benevolence would not run. A system which necessarily involved them would scarcely be adopted for the sole purpose of promoting happiness.

(2). The administration is too strict. The connexion between the conduct and the recompense is inseparable, even when the recompense is most fearful. Pure benevolence, it may be conceived, would allow an error to be retrieved, or an offence to be forgiven, and would recoil from the adoption of a system so inflexible that it could allow of no repentance, and of no mercy.

(3). The foreseen results are too awful. It being known beforehand to how great an extent disobedience would spread, how resolute and universal would be the rebellion of men, and how fearful and everlasting would be their ruin, benevolence by herself would surely shrink from such an issue. If effects like these are to be contemplated, some sterner attribute must decide on adopting the system. I conclude, therefore, that God's government of man did not spring out of his love of the happy.

3. Thirdly, has this system sprung out of God's love of the right? To this question it is now obvious to answer, that it must needs have done so, since no other impulse of divine activity remains to which it can be assigned; it may be added, however, that none of the reasons on account of which we have been led to withdraw it from the originating power of his love of the beautiful and his love of the happy

operate here. That may be accordant with love of the right which involves great risks, requires an inflexible administration, and occasions fearful results. These considerations, though barring both complacency and benevolence from this position, leave it, nevertheless, clear for the occupation of holiness.

The right may be regarded in two aspects; it is either essential, or modified. Essential right is always the same, being founded in the nature of things immutable; modified right arises out of things mutable, such as created existences, and their relations one to another. Now, among many modes of right thus arising, this will be found to be one, the rendering to others that which is their due. This has been called distributive, or administrative, right. It is the right as executed by a master who employs servants, by a magistrate who administers laws, by a king who rules the state. It is often called distributive justice. This is a modification of the love of the right which, generally speaking, it is open to God to assume as part of the manifestation of his own character. He has, accordingly, been pleased to become a ruler and a judge; and, for the manifestation and exercise of his justice in rendering to others that which is their due, he has instituted his government over man. This is his object, or that which he means to effect by it, in relation to himself.

II. Is, then, the government of God, thus selected as a sphere for the manifestation of his justice, adapted to that end? This is the second question to which we shall endeavour to obtain an answer.

Now, that God's government of man, thus selected as a sphere for the manifestation of his justice, is adapted to that end, is obvious at a glance. Mark again what it is that he has done. He had it in view to produce a system in which it should devolve upon him to render to others that which is their due; he, therefore, brings into existence a self-governing being, to whom a sphere of independent action is assigned; a being of quick sensibility to motives and recompenses, and one who, thus appealed to, will be sure to contract either good or ill desert. He will either yield to the motives presented to him, or he will resist them; and there will be due to him, consequently, either reward for his obedience, or punishment for his disobedience. Here is clearly a sphere, therefore, within which distributive justice, that is to say,

the rendering to others that which is their due, may be exercised.

1. It is evident that in all the arrangements of such a system justice *may* be exercised. In the very structure of this creature himself, in the mode in which the mental and emotional powers are combined, and made to act one upon another, and in the delicate construction of the mechanism of voluntary action, there is ample scope for the exercise of justice. To the adaptation of the motives presented, both in their nature and their intensity, a similar observation applies. That they should be of a kind to make an effective appeal, but not an overpowering one, and adapted to stimulate the powers, but not to oppress them—in these points there is evidently a scope for the most careful exercise of justice. In the allotment of responsibility there is further scope for the same attribute, in order that it should not be either in defect or in excess, but that, according to the means of knowledge enjoyed and the force of motives presented, the requirement may be neither too much nor too little. The estimate of good and ill desert opens a still wider field for the exercise of justice, the varieties of human conduct exhibiting innumerable and ever-varying phases for equitable consideration. And, in fine, the administration of recompense is the direct exercise of distributive justice itself, which may be embodied in every act of retribution. All the parts and aspects of such a system present a scope for the exercise of this attribute.

2. And as, on the one hand, in the arrangements of such a system justice *may* be exercised, so, on the other, it may be said that justice *must* be exercised. Nothing may be done otherwise than by the most careful application of the rules of justice in every respect. For this is the very principle upon which the whole system rests. It is a system devised and brought into action for this very purpose, that God may have an opportunity of rendering to men that which is their due; it must, therefore, be just in every arrangement. "To every man according to his deeds," is the great law and rule of the whole. It is not in any measure optional, it is obligatory upon God, since he has chosen to establish it, in every part of this system to maintain justice inflexibly. As a judge in an earthly court may not, for any consideration whatever, deviate from the justice due, either to the party

whom he has before him on trial, or to the sovereign whom to that party he represents, so neither may the Judge of all the earth do anything but right, in the cause either of himself or his creatures.

3. The government of God is a system in which *nothing but justice* may be exercised. Justice is naturally conceived of as not standing alone, but as one of a group of attributes blended in the same person. Thus in common life its operation may be modified by other feelings, such as those of personal kindness, or of resentment. In God's government of man, however, we have a sphere for the exercise of justice exclusively. If not existing alone, here it must act alone. It must not be interfered with by any personal feeling, whether in aggravation or mitigation of an offence, whether in depreciation or exaggeration of a virtue. No consideration must be permitted to modify the good or ill pertaining to desert; but desert must be strictly regarded, and all deeds weighed as in a balance. Modified by other feelings of any kind, the administration of the system would be no longer perfectly just, and it would thus lose, in part, the very character for the sake of which it was devised.

God's government of man, then, is a system which admits and requires the exercise of justice in all its parts, and presents a scope for the display of this attribute at once broad and delicate beyond imagination. One cannot conceive of any created being, however just, being adequate to the arrangement or administration of such a system. It not only gives scope for justice, and demands it, but it creates scope and requirement for justice not less than divine.

III. We come now to the third question to which we must endeavour to obtain an answer; namely, Is the manifestation of his distributive justice an object excellent and worthy of God?

1. The answer to this question cannot be difficult, inasmuch as, in the first place, justice is one of the aspects of the divine character. Now all aspects of the divine character are glorious. Every one of them is worthy of being displayed. Infinitely glorious God! His power, his knowledge, his wisdom, his goodness, are all worthy of display; and equally so is his justice. No single perfection can be detached from this group of glories, and placed under ban, as if it should be said, "That attribute of Deity is not worthy of

exhibition." And, if the justice of God be worthy of display, it is worthy of the creation of a sphere for the purpose, since, without the creation of such a sphere, it never could have been exhibited. God cannot render to others what is their due, unless those to whom their due is to be rendered are brought into being in adapted circumstances. Except as he has been pleased to form other beings, God is alone, and, consequently, he could have no scope for the exercise of his administrative justice without creating those who should be subjected to his rule, and thus providing the sphere within which his justice should be exercised. If, however, this be an attribute worthy of exhibition, then he did a worthy thing in creating the sphere in which alone it could be manifested.

2. In the second place, justice is not only one aspect of God's character, and therefore worthy of exhibition, but an especially illustrious aspect of his character, and so pre-eminently worthy of it. It is in some sense great *to be*, but the value of existence rises in proportion to the faculties with which it is endowed. Office adds a further dignity to it, in proportion to the qualities it supposes, and the influence it confers. A magistrate is raised to a certain degree above his fellows, and a monarch still more highly. It is an elevation to possess authority, to exercise rule, to administer law, and an honour of high degree to discharge these important functions well. God, therefore, in making himself a ruler and judge, assumes an important and exalted position, and the attribute of his character to be developed in this position is of proportionate nobleness and worth.

In the work of creation, for example, there is a display of God's goodness. His wisdom and power made the sun and the stars, the earth and the sea, the summer and the winter, with the multitude of living tribes subservient to man on the earth. His wisdom is exhibited also in the creation of other worlds, doubtless glorious like this. In the ways of providence the wisdom and goodness of God are exhibited, by the marvellously skilful administration of inexhaustible bounty. These attributes of wisdom, power, and goodness, are glorious, and so also is the display of them, and it is worth while to do all that God has done for this end; but the perfections exercised in government are higher and nobler than these. To apply motives rightly, to estimate character

fairly, and to assign recompenses justly, constitute a superior mode of action, and one which requires higher attributes. There is no character among men more venerable than that of a just ruler. One who has fulfilled the great obligation of justice, and resisted the many influences which tend to vitiate its administration, in all respects maintaining the rectitude and dignity of his position, is highly and deservedly honoured. To such honour there is no conceivable reason why the most high God should not entitle himself. For the purpose of adding this to his other glories he has instituted his government of man; he has assumed the station of Judge of all the earth, that therein he may execute righteous judgment. A highly glorious aspect of God's character is this, for the manifestation of which it is worth while to have constituted his persuasive government. It is only thus that he could show it, and strange it were that it should be forbidden to him alone to be a ruler and a judge, while he above all is capable of exhibiting in perfection the attributes which the position requires.

3. In the third place, the manifestation of God's justice in the sphere thus created for it is the more worthy of him, inasmuch as it is in full harmony with all his other attributes. I am aware that this may be thought tender ground, and that there are some aspects of the case which might appear to lead to a contrary conclusion; but let us examine them.

It may seem, on the one hand, that God's government of man is too awful to be beautiful, even in the sense of the love of right. Now I admit that its penal issues may well be looked at with a sense of shrinking and dismay; I think, however, that we are liable to do injustice to the government of God by drawing too close a parallel between it and the governments of this world. Human judicial administration has nothing to do with one part, I may say the greater part, of our conduct, inasmuch as it attaches no recompense to keeping the law. It does nothing but define crimes, and prescribe penalties for them. This is only one half—it is much less than half—of the sphere of government. Those who are obedient to the laws—always the majority—receive from the government no recompense; all that they obtain is a well-ordered state of the society in which they live. If you have done nothing amiss, the magistrate demands nothing of you; it is only when you have misbehaved your-

self that you hear of a summons, or see an officer. So that the entire function of human government lies in the detection and punishment of offenders. Now, in reasoning from the human to the divine, we are liable from this cause to attach an idea to the government of God which is unjust. It is not its sole function to detect and punish offenders. It comprehends equally the other side of human conduct; it allots recompenses to all actions, and not less a reward to the good than punishment to the evil. Now, if human government presented to us such an aspect, it would become a very different thing in our eyes. A multitude of persons would be rewarded for good conduct, and a very small minority punished for misdoing; and this would give to the entire system a character of benignity and beauty which it now fails to possess. Such is the government of God, and, being such, it is, in the sense of the love of right, beautiful. It contemplates rectitude universally, and blesses every instance of conformity to it, as it avenges every line of departure from it. In such a system alone can the love of right have its full gratification; and, exercised on such a principle, the system under which it is developed has a moral beauty appealing to the admiration of all.

It may seem, on the other hand, as though the inflexibility of God's administration was scarcely consistent with the beautiful. Is there not something of unamiable rigour about a system under which a fault cannot be retrieved, or an offence be forgiven? Now I know how important it is that there should be a provision of mercy for human transgression, inasmuch as we have all broken God's law, and mercy is our only hope. I rejoice to know, also, that mercy full and free is proclaimed to us; this, however, is not by the natural or direct operation of God's government, but results from a special dispensation, into which mercy is introduced on the ground of atonement for sin by the obedience unto death of the Son of God. The government of God, as such, provides no mercy. It cannot. It were an overthrow of itself to attempt it. The great object of the system is to afford scope for the exercise of justice; the great law of the system is to render to every man according to his works; and, without subverting the system itself, there can be no deviation from that law. Such a deviation would be equivalent to a confession that the system was vicious, and would over-

throw the foundation on which it rests. And why, let it be asked, should there be a deviation from the law, if the law be just? Why should a punishment be mitigated that is not unrighteous? It is to do justice that this scheme is constituted; and, if only justice be done, what plea is there for the turning aside of any of its awards? To mitigate its sentence would be to admit that it was too severe—that is to say, unjust—and to acknowledge that it ought never to have been passed. That cannot be. Consistently with God's honour it would not be possible. It would have been better for him never to have instituted such a system, than to dishonour it with his own hand.

Such is the view that I take of the object of God's government of man in relation to himself. He would have a sphere for the exercise of distributive justice, or justice as manifested in allotting to others their due; and, for the display of his glory in relation to this attribute, did he most worthily constitute his persuasive government of mankind.

It may, in conclusion, be observed generally, that God's government of man places itself in strict harmony with his other works. They are for the manifestation of himself, and so also is this. In whatsoever measure diverse in detail, it is the same in principle. It extends his operations without violating their unity.

It may be observed further, that, as in relation to man, so in relation to himself, the object of God's government is attained independently of human will. Whether man will or no, he probes the heart; and whether man will or no, he displays his distributive justice. Whether he has to administer penalty or reward, his justice shines as conspicuously in the one case as in the other, and in the one case as in the other he is as truly glorified.

Finally, my dear hearers, let us not forget that this is a subject of great practical importance to us. We are sinners. We have broken God's law, and deserved his anger. We shall every one of us, under God's government, have our desert. "To every man according to his works," is its inflexible rule. How can it be otherwise? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The sentence that has gone forth from God's lips, shall this not be fulfilled? The word he has spoken, shall that be trampled under foot? Impossible. Heaven and earth shall fail, rather than one

iota of his law shall be unfulfilled. "To every one according to his deeds." Are you prepared, dear hearer, to meet that issue? Are you content that the works which you have done should come into judgment, and return in just displeasure upon your soul? Ah! bethink yourself. For mercy still presents itself to you; mercy through Jesus Christ, and through atoning blood. Thus is proclaimed to you a full and free forgiveness. Rebel, whom the law condemns! Rebel, whose repentance, though poured out in floods of tears, would be of no avail! Rebel, whose reformation could effect no solution of your difficulties! Rebel, undone but for atoning blood! Yet come to Calvary; yet hearken to the loving voice that calls you there, and says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37).

HYMN.

BRIGHTLY, Lord, thy glories shine,
 Displayed on every hand;
 Goodness, wisdom, power divine,
 In radiant beauty stand:
 Yet thy nature doth appear
 In a nobler character.

Over thrilling hearts 'tis thine
 In righteousness to reign,
 And a recompense to assign
 Of equal joy or pain:
 Let the world thy justice know;
 Judge of all the earth art thou.

Can I bear thy strict survey?
 O judge me not, my God!
 Wash my heinous sins away
 In the Redeemer's blood:
 Grace and justice thus shall be
 Jointly glorified in me.

LECTURE X.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF MAN—ITS DESTINY: OR, HOW WILL IT END.

“As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”—*Romans* xiv. 11.

GOD's government of man is evidently a scheme of much grandeur. There is magnificence in the leading conception of it as a government of motive, not of force—of persuasion, and not of power. And all its features harmonize with this its leading characteristic. It has a fair scope in man's allotted sphere of independent action; it has a righteous basis in man's relation to God as his Creator; it is constituted of congruous elements—means of knowledge to which responsibility is proportionate, aspects of motive in all respects adapted to the faculties to which they appeal, and an element of retribution fitted, both in its nature and degree, to render to every man his due. If we examine its tendency, we find this to be benign, since it guides to happiness, and reduces within narrower limits the hazards attaching to the existence of a rational and immortal being. If we contemplate its object, we find this to be excellent, whether we regard it as the probation of an intelligent creature, or the display of a divine perfection. Such a system commends itself in all respects to our judgment. It is a wise, a noble, an admirable system, and one which merits a happy and honourable issue. It does not deserve failure. It is a system to which man ought to render obedience, and from which God ought to gather praise. But how will this admirable system really terminate? That is the question which it remains for us to take up this evening.

I. The question which I have thus propounded does not admit of a reply in a single word. God's government of man is not proceeding towards its final issue by direct and simple steps, and, in the present stage of its progress, facts are palpable which tend to create a certain measure of doubt and anxiety as to its ultimate glory.

Let us, in the first place, advert to the causes of this anxiety. They are two.

1. On the one hand, mankind universally have resisted

God's government, and trampled his law under their feet. There is no exception to this statement; none in ancient or in modern times, none in any country or in any clime, none among any people or in any social or intellectual condition. In the words of the apostle, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans iii. 23). The language of the Old Testament presents this fact to us in forcible terms.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,
There is none that doeth good.
The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.
They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Psalm xiv. 1-3.

In this statement there is something exceedingly melancholy. Among men crime is in many cases associated with circumstances tending to mitigate it, and in some it is at least partially relieved by its allied virtues. When a government is resisted, or the chain of slavery is broken, if there be fault admitted on one side, there may be somewhat of nobleness, or even justice, to be acknowledged on the other. In the case of man towards God, however, rebellion bears against the holiest, wisest, gentlest, government that ever had an existence, a government for resisting which not a shadow of reason can be found. The prevalence of treason, generally speaking, if not always, is partial, and not universal. If a government has some enemies, for the most part also it has some friends, a more or less numerous party of adherents. But in this case there are no parties. The whole world, including every individual of mankind, has rebelled. God's government has not acquired, throughout all ages, a single friend; and it stands out in history as at once the most just and the most hated, the most benign and the most abhorred. And this is not a human government, to which imperfections, and even faults, may be deemed necessarily incidental; but it is God's own government, so that the wisdom, the equity, and the benignity, thrown into it are no less than infinite. This is assuredly a melancholy state of things.

2. On the other hand, dishonour seems to be done to this government by God himself. For, while there is this vast

amount of disobedience in the world, there is also an apparent slackness of divine judgment. Not only is there long continued forbearance, but there is absolutely a proclamation of mercy; mercy spontaneous, free, and rich beyond expression or conception. We hear of pardon. "Come, now," says a voice from heaven, "and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i. 18). And with pardon are conjoined inestimable privileges: "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians vi. 18). It cannot be unreasonable to ask, What does all this mean? Is God about to abandon the high ground of justice which he had taken? Having uttered threatenings with so much solemnity, is he hesitating at the fulfilment of them? Does this apparent retraction of his word really mean, that he himself is about to cast shame on the system of which it was the guarantee? Is the edifice which has been constructed with so much care, and has put forth its claims to such high admiration, to be undermined by its author's hand, and so recklessly overthrown that its materials shall lie in everlasting and dishonourable ruin? No, my brethren, these things are not to be. Hear a voice from heaven which utters a different language. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." God's government of man shall yet be inflexibly maintained, and abundantly glorified.

II. In the second place, then, let us examine the method by which this result will be attained.

1. Here I refer, in the first place, to the second of the two sources of anxiety which I have indicated, the divine interposition of mercy. Even this shall glorify God's government. It might have been presumed, indeed, that it would do so, from what is known of his character. It is not likely that a being of infinite resources would bring forward a system which should ultimately be to his reproach. It is much more probable that, by some collateral course, he would find means of rendering the interposition of mercy consistent with his righteousness.

And as this might have been fairly presumed from what is known of the character of God, so the anticipation is fully realized by an examination of the system of mercy itself.

It is obvious that, in relation to the question before us,

everything depends on the manner in which the interposition of mercy has been effected. Had it been simple and direct, had it consisted in an unqualified abandonment of the punishment, or retractation of the threatening, that would indeed have been for God to forfeit his veracity, to stain his righteousness, to “deny himself,” and to dishonour his whole name. This, however, is not the case. The interposition of mercy, although perfectly effectual, is accomplished in a manner indirect and qualified—qualified, indeed, with extreme elaborateness. Antecedent to the proclamation of grace, there was a vast series, so to speak, of divine transactions, not only devised, but carried into effect; and by these the foundation for it was laid. They are stated in the Scriptures to have been the objects and the results of deep counsel—“the counsel of peace”—held in the bosom of the sacred Trinity, and engaging the infinite wisdom, as well as love, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This deep counsel may be regarded as indicating the extreme perplexities, humanly speaking, of the work which was taken in hand, as well as the determination of the whole Godhead, not only that the work should be done, but that it should be done in a manner worthy of its author.

In these antecedent transactions, the great fact is the anticipated humiliation of the Son of God, and the sacrifice of himself upon the cross. This the Scriptures uniformly represent as an offering of expiation, or an atonement for sin. Thus, you recollect, Christ is proclaimed as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29). Thus the apostle tells us, “God made him to be sin [that is, a sin-offering] for us;” giving us in almost identical terms the sentiment of the ancient prophet, who says—

“He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement of our peace was upon him,
And by his stripes we are healed.”

Isaiah liii. 5.

Now, in order to arrive at so wonderful a result, it is evident that, under a government of pure justice, previous arrangements of great magnitude must be necessary. We say that Jesus Christ, by his voluntary suffering, was made a sacrifice for sin; but it belongs to the government of God, as strictly just, not to inflict punishment for sin upon any

but the sinner. The stroke of wrath must fall with precision, and cannot, may not, fall upon any but the transgressor. And, if the stroke which, according to the equity of the divine government, would fall upon the sinner himself, and could fall nowhere else, does, in point of fact, fall, not upon the sinner, but upon another, that evidently must take place by virtue of some arrangement devised for the purpose, and grafted on the system as originally framed. The simple action of God's government never would have arrived at that result.

Let us look at this case theoretically, and inquire by what kind of arrangement the difficulty might, to our conception, be met. It might be relieved, it is obvious, by such an arrangement as this—that there should be introduced a method of substitution, by which another person may be allowed to stand in the place, and discharge the responsibilities, of him who has sinned. The principle of such a proceeding being admitted, any one willing to become the sinner's substitute may be dealt with as if he himself were the sinner. Such a plan we are assured was formed in divine council, and accepted by the glorious persons primarily interested in it: first, by the eternal Father, in his diverse but blended characters of Sovereign and Parent of the race, and righteous Ruler and Judge; and, secondly, by the Son, who, in love unspeakable, gave his consent to become the substitute for man, and as such to bear the burden of his guilt. This arrangement being made, our Lord and Saviour possesses a standing, so to speak, under the government of God, and, in relation to his legal liability, he occupies the sinner's place.

The principle of substitution being admitted, the government of God has still some requirements to make with regard to the party who shall become the substitute, in order that he who occupies so important and responsible a position may be qualified to answer all its demands. In this respect further particulars require to be noticed.

As a substitute for sinners under God's government there is required, first, a being free from sin. One who was himself a transgressor would have had to answer for his own offences, and could not have been permitted to stand in the room of other offenders. There is required, in the second place, a being of human kind. For, as it is man who has sinned, so the party to be dealt with in his place must also

be a man. The element of kindred is requisite to give the substitute a propriety in his position. He must not be an angel, for an angel is a stranger, and has no natural right of interference. Further, man only can atone for man, the reparation to the law being demanded in the nature in which it was broken. And, thirdly, there is required, not only a being sinless and human, but a being more than human. One who was only man could have been available as substitute only for one other man; but, if there is to be one human being accepted as substitute for a whole world, he surely must be more than man in order to give an adequate value to his person. There is required a superior nature, a nature, it might seem, not less than divine. And thus we arrive at the ground of that infinite marvel of divine wisdom and compassion, the conception and constitution of the person of Christ; a man, a sinless man, and at the same time incarnate God—the second person of the eternal Trinity taking our flesh in the man Christ Jesus. Such is the substitute provided for us, and in his person are combined all the qualifications that the divine government requires.

It remained that, upon this substitute for human kind, there should be inflicted the penalty due to human transgression. And that penalty was inflicted on Jesus, when, according to the Scriptures, he himself “bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter ii. 24). Such was the source of the unparalleled agony beneath which he “sweat as it were great drops of blood” (Luke xxii. 44), and of the baptism of woe from the depths of which he cried, “It is finished” (John xix. 30).

Now all these divine transactions are, actually or virtually, antecedent to the extension of mercy to mankind. Not a syllable was said to the human race about forgiveness of sin until all this was done, or regarded as done; for, although the proclamation of grace was made before the actual death of Christ, it was upon the basis of that fact as contemplated by God, “who calleth things which be not as though they were” (Romans iv. 17). And wherefore was this elaborate preparation? Why could not the proclamation of mercy have been simply made without all this antecedent labour; a labour evidently so vast and so magnificent in counsel and in might, and going so far beyond, not merely the creation, but the entire government of the world besides? Only for

this reason—to “magnify the law, and make it honourable” (Isaiah xlii. 21), by fulfilling its demands upon man before man should be released from its penal bearing upon himself. That was the true reason, and there was no other. Suppose that the demands of God’s law upon man do not exist, or that they do not require to be fulfilled, and not one shadow of a reason remains why any of those eternal counsels of peace should have been held, or why any of those vast transactions of mercy which we have been surveying should have been devised. Their sole object was to put the government of God into a position in which, if it should set the actual rebel free, it might still be manifest that it had enforced all its requirements, and received all its dues. By such a process as this the government of God is manifestly honoured. The penalty of human transgression having been suffered by Jesus Christ, a victim already accepted as a competent substitute for our sinful race, the law of God is not less honoured than if the satisfaction had been offered by mankind themselves. Nay, it receives in this manner much more exalted honour; because the obedience thus rendered to it, with the resulting testimony to its excellency, is rendered by a being of a higher nature, whose superior and singular dignity throws its glory upon the system to which he bows. And when we reflect that the nature which was thus obedient, which in its voluntary agony bore the penalty of human transgression, and testified its sense of the excellency of the law thus awfully executed on itself, was divine; that the Son of God became man, and blended the Creator and the creature in a mysterious union, for the purpose of this great act of retributive justice—it is impossible to conceive that the government of God can be more highly magnified, or that his law can receive a more magnificent testimony. Not the plaudits of the entire universe could render it equal praise.

I proceed to observe, that the proclamation of mercy is carried into effect in a way altogether harmonizing with the principle of its preparation. The release of sinners from condemnation, while an act of grace, is also an act of justice. It is strictly a process of divine government. It is not that the expiatory sacrifice of our divine Redeemer has directly and necessarily the effect of releasing the sinner from his position of wrath; this result is contingent on proceedings

which have yet to take place. A process of judgment goes on, and the very act of release is itself judicial. This idea is evidently contained in the word by which it is scripturally expressed; by it a sinner is said to be "justified" (Rom. v. 1). To justify is the act of a judge, and a process of judgment. The transgressor is held to his responsibility until the act is formally accomplished, and, when it is so, he receives his full and authoritative release. The judge pronounces him righteous, thus giving an official validity to the system under which his deliverance has been provided for. Even this high act of grace, therefore, is also an act of righteous government, and of strict law. It is a sentence pronounced by a judge; for a sentence of justification is as truly a sentence pronounced by a judge as a sentence of condemnation. Thus is another tribute of honour paid to the government of God.

I may further illustrate the subject before us by observing, that the proclamation of mercy is itself wrought into the government of God, and becomes the basis of a new and varied probation for man. Under it God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30). Men are to "obey the Gospel" (Romans x. 16). It comes to them in the shape of a command, to which, accordingly, obedience is required and recompense is attached. It is but an additional department of God's government by persuasion. These are its laws—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 30). "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16). Here is still government; a precept to be fulfilled, motives to obedience, and a recompense according to conduct pursued. It is an enlargement in that direction of God's previous system, and perfectly in harmony with that which has gone before. As to the proclamation of mercy obedience is required, so in the acceptance of it obedience is rendered. Persons believing in Jesus Christ are "obedient to the faith" (Acts vi. 7), and "submit themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans x. 3), that is, to God's method of justifying them. Faith in Christ is an act of submission, carrying with it an acknowledgment of guilt as charged, a confession of the righteousness of the sentence passed, and an entire concurrence in the honour rendered to the law of God by the atoning blood of Jesus. It is thus to an act of obedience that justification itself is attached. The first act of obedience

which the rebel performs towards the government of God is that with which his justification through grace is conjoined.

From yet another aspect of the dispensation of mercy may an illustration of our subject be derived. We know that to the atoning work of Christ is added the renovating work of the Holy Spirit, the communication of whose quickening influence is undoubtedly an act of the richest and most sovereign grace. Now it may be truly said that the Holy Spirit magnifies the government of God, for when, by grace, he is sent into a man's heart, he first leads him to own his guilt, to confess the justice of his condemnation, and to submit to the righteousness of God by faith. His influence brings the rebel's feelings into harmony with the government of his Maker, although he is condemned by it, and makes him submissive to the mode of justification by which he is to be released from its curse. And all that the Spirit of God works afterwards tends in the same direction. Under this holy guidance, a believer in Christ takes the law of God as the rule of his life; and this law, which he so lately trampled on, becomes to him the standard of spiritual beauty by which his character is ultimately formed.

Let us now ask, What is the feeling which is left upon our minds by this brief survey of the manner in which mercy has been permitted to interpose in the government of God? It is clear that it has been so done that grace should go hand in hand with righteousness, and God be at once "a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah xlv. 21). If the government of God would have been honourable either in the reward of a righteous man or the condemnation of a guilty one, it is to the full as honourable in the justification of a sinner through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

2. If, however, the honour of the government of God is thus provided for in the case of the penitent saved, how is it to be secured, we have yet to ask, in the case of those who still rebel, and reject even mercy itself? In answer to this question, let it be remembered that a broken law is not necessarily a dishonoured one. If iniquity be avenged, the law is sufficiently vindicated. It is satisfied, if not by obedience rendered, by penalty endured. And thus, in the case of the obstinately disobedient, will the law of God be magnified. Harken to his words:—

“To me belongeth vengeance and recompense.
I will render vengeance to mine enemies,
And will reward them that hate me.”

Deuteronomy xxxii. 35, 41.

In that retribution the influence of the proclamation of mercy will be felt. As the Gospel is incorporated into God's government of man, obedience to it constituting one of his obligations, and the rejection of it forming part of his guilt, so shall this element of his conduct receive due notice at last. He that finally rejects the pleas of redeeming grace, “of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy!” He has “trampled under foot the Son of God,” and will have to endure a proportionate recompense when “the great day of his wrath is come.” In this method will the honour of God's government, in the case of those who defy it in both its forms, be adequately vindicated.

Such is the destiny of God's government of man, and thus will it end. Trampled on universally by the subjects of it, and apparently abandoned by its author, it is yet to emerge in glory. Sin, it is true, “hath reigned unto death,” but even so shall “grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life” (Rom. v. 21) to all who accept its provisions, while every persistent transgressor shall receive “a just recompense of reward.” And thus shall be brought to pass that which is written—“As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

The general sentiment which such a prospect inspires is assuredly one of satisfaction and joy. Pity, indeed, had it been, if a scheme so wise, so benign, and so just, had issued in any form of dishonour. It deserves honour from men; but, since they have despised their privilege, it is well that its author, in his infinite wisdom, has found means of securing, in connexion with his richest mercy, its ample vindication.

And let us remember that God's government of man will not merely be honoured as a whole, but that it will be so in the case of every individual. “As I live, saith the Lord, *every knee* shall bow to me.” And in one of two ways shall this assuredly be verified to each of us. If I persist in sin, I shall have to bow my knee as a criminal, to receive at the hand of the Judge a confessedly righteous doom; if I accept mercy, I shall have to bow my knee as a penitent, in grateful

submission to the judicial act of "justification of life." In one or the other of these ways every knee must bow to God, and it surely cannot be to us a matter of indifference in which of these ways it shall be! Say, dear hearer, in what spirit shall this attitude be assumed by you? That of a proud but confounded rebel? Or that of a rebel humbled and subdued?

It should be deeply graven on our hearts, that, if we are to escape from the penalty of the law, it must be by the administration of the law. Not even for the carrying out of God's purpose of mercy is the law to be set aside. In order to be saved we are to be justified, or declared righteous, by an act strictly judicial. Let us dismiss, therefore, all hope of a mere act of grace apart from righteousness, and all expectation of the efficacy of repentance apart from faith in Jesus. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans v. 1).

Having thus completed our projected course of Lectures, before taking final leave of our subject let us briefly review the ground over which we have gone. God's government of man we have found to consist in a series of persuasive appeals, enforced by recompense. We have ascertained the existence of a scope for this system in the independent agency of man, and we have discovered a basis for it in his relative position; we have examined the elements of it—knowledge, motive, and retribution; we have traced the tendency of it as a guide to human happiness; we have contemplated the object of it as an instrument of human probation; we have exhibited the rule of it as a sphere of divine justice; and we have surveyed the destiny of it as conducive to God's eternal praise. That the subjects we have thus treated have been of the deepest interest and importance we have all felt; it remains for us to apply to our personal profit the instruction we have received.

With this view let us solemnly impress on our minds the true nature of the system under which we are primarily placed. By the keeping of God's commandments, indeed, we cannot attain to happiness, for we have already grievously broken them; but it is by correctly understanding the nature of his government that we shall best learn the scope of our duty, and the amount of our guilt. To know ourselves sinners is a necessary preparation for the appreciation of pardon.

I commenced these discourses with the observation, that, although the subject of them was not directly evangelical, it was so closely connected with the Gospel as to derive from this consideration an augmented interest; and now, in a few words, allow me to illustrate the connexion which I then indicated.

God's persuasive government of man, I said, was immediately antecedent to the dispensation of mercy, its basis and platform. Since, then, that government is a system of strict and unsullied equity, the dispensation which comes to remedy the consequences of its violation must be one of pure and sovereign grace. Man, as a transgressor, is not only ruined, but wrong; the law he has broken is righteous, and the penalty that falls upon him is deserved. He must take position, not as a party aggrieved, but as a party offending; he must not bedeck himself with pride, but cover himself with shame. To him it is indeed "the GRACE of God that bringeth salvation." What an infinite happiness it is for us that the grace of God has shown itself equal to so great an emergency!

"Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins!"

It might have been deemed that a course of rebellion so deeply criminal would have shut up the compassion of an offended sovereign; but "mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James ii. 13), and a lost world may well be glad at her triumph. O be that mercy dear to every heart—to yours, beloved hearer, and to mine!

HYMN.

"As I live"—O mark the vow!—

"Every knee to me shall bow;
Every tongue of man confess
Just and right are all my ways."

Thus hath sworn the sovereign Lord,
And his works fulfil his word;
Works of grace in justice done,
Through the merits of his Son.

He the law hath magnified,
Man hath trampled in his pride;
Now 'tis writ in lines of blood
That 'tis holy, just, and good.

Bow to righteousness divine,
And eternal life is thine;
Heaven's appeal of right deny,
And thou shalt for ever die.

ON REDEMPTION:

ELEVEN LECTURES.

PREFACE.

THE Lectures which are now presented to the public were preached at Devonshire Square Chapel, Bishopsgate Street, London, in the spring of 1858.

They were not preached with an intention to publish them, and I have hesitated long before yielding to the requests kindly presented to me to prepare them for the press. I can perceive, indeed, that, taken in connexion with the two courses of Lectures already published—the first, on Acquaintance with God; and the second, on God's Government of Man—these will form a third volume, not only closely connected with those which have preceded it, but giving to the whole series a useful and desirable completeness; and this is, doubtless, the ground of my friends' importunity. I have hesitated, however, neither because I am unwilling to oblige them, nor because I am reluctant to bear what may be, perhaps, my last public testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus; but because a considerable portion of what I have here advanced is to be found in my early theological writings.

I have, after much consideration, however, consented to the publication of these Lectures; partly because my early writings are so little known to my present circle of friends—it is more than thirty years since my THEOLOGY issued from the press—partly because I am not sorry to make known to the world that, in the progress of life, my religious views have not been changed, and partly because the Lectures are not by any means a reprint, although a partial reproduction, of my published thoughts. The form and expression are so entirely new, and the treatment so much more popular, that I hope, not only for a welcome from new readers, but for forgiveness from the old.

On the second of the reasons just stated I may, perhaps, be permitted to add a few words.

I was young when I commenced writing on systematic divinity, and I wrote upon it in a manner which some of my friends thought rash, and others heterodox. My youth supplied to them the elements, both of an apology, and a prophecy. "Ah!" said they, "he is a young man, excuse him; he will not think so when he gets older." For the excuses which my friends have kindly made for me through a long life and an extended ministry, I am deeply grateful; but I cannot afford any of them the satisfaction of knowing that their prophecy has been fulfilled.

I am now almost seventy years of age, and I have spent nearly forty-five years in the ministry of the Gospel; but my theological views are, notwithstanding all anticipations and announcements, unchanged. I state the fact as a fact merely, without taking to myself either praise or blame; let those who are acquainted with it assign to me the portion of one or the other which they may think my due. It might seem that, during a half century in which science and art have made such extraordinary progress, theology ought not to have been stationary, and, assuredly, with some divines it has been far from being so; I do not believe, however, in the progress of theology. I began, and I end, the study of it, not with a new book, but with an old one; and, when I find that the views which I first thoughtfully derived from "the oracles of God" have endured the frequent and earnest reconsideration to which, with no disregard of auxiliary lights, they have been subjected, and have otherwise stood the wear and tear of a forty years' ministry, I am thankful. I think God has herein shown me mercy; if he has found me perverse, may he graciously forgive!

These Lectures have been written for the press from copious short-hand notes, and are nearly as they were delivered. May the gracious Master whom I thus endeavour to serve accept and bless this small, but willing, contribution to his cause!

JOHN HOWARD HINTON.

DE BEAUVOIR TOWN, LONDON,
October, 1859.

ON REDEMPTION.

LECTURE I.

THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF REDEMPTION.

“I looked, and there was none to help; . . . therefore mine own arm brought salvation.”—*Isaiah* lxiii. 5.

IN two former courses of Lectures I have directed your attention to the character of God, and to his government of man; it will be but pursuing the train of thought thus opened, if, on the present occasion, I take up the subject of Redemption, a portion of God's administration towards man of which his moral government is the basis, and in which it culminates. Undoubtedly, redemption presents to us the grandest aspect of the ways of God, that in which his character is most signally displayed, and in which a guilty world has the deepest interest. Nothing can be more important to us than a correct understanding and a just appreciation of it; and that the discourses now to be delivered may, under God's blessing, be made conducive to this end, is my humble desire, and my earnest prayer.

I should begin, perhaps, by a remark explanatory of the sense in which I have already used, and frequently shall use, the word redemption. This term is scripturally employed to denote the release of men from sin and its penal consequences; as when Christ is said (*Hebrews* ix. 17) to have “obtained eternal redemption for us.” Without excluding this idea, I shall use the liberty of somewhat enlarging the sense conveyed. I shall speak of redemption, not so much as a state of blessedness to be enjoyed by man, but rather as a process of administration devised and carried out by God; and it will be my object to examine and exhibit the various aspects of it as a divine dispensation of mercy towards our

race. Under this view of it a variety of most interesting and important topics will present themselves to our notice.

The subject which I have proposed for consideration this evening is the proximate cause of redemption, or, in less technical terms, the immediate occasion of it.

In the very title of my discourse I have already assumed an important proposition. I have assumed this, that redemption had an occasion; an occasion which was furnished by some painful occurrence in the history of our race, and to which it bears the relation of a remedy. I affirm, consequently, by implication, that redemption was not a part of God's original plan of administration. I am quite aware, however, that this will not be universally granted me; and, in order to do justice to the subject in my hands, it will be necessary to pay a passing regard to the grounds on which it is disputed.

On the one hand, there is a class of divines who represent the redemption of mankind as identical with the creation, or rather with the existence, of the race. We are gravely told that humanity had an eternal existence in Christ, and in Christ was eternally beloved, elected, and redeemed. On this I shall only observe, that I hold the eternal existence of the human race in Christ to be a pure fiction, alike unprovable and unintelligible. It is rooted in a philosophical speculation—the Platonic system of ideas—which is palpably false, and which is subversive at once of the moral government of God, and of the gospel of Christ. It is the dictate of common sense—it will, at any rate, be enough for us—to date the existence of man from his creation in paradise, and his redemption subsequent to his creation.

On the other hand, there is a class of divines who assure us that the whole course of human affairs is but the working out of God's original plan, all things having been fore-ordained from eternity, and coming to pass as they were ordained. Now, I am quite satisfied that God designed from eternity whatever he himself would do, and that all *his* works are but the fulfilment of these eternal purposes; but I am not prepared to admit that all that has occurred in human history, either was planned by God, or has been done by him. Of necessity, God's doings and designs are, like himself, holy and benevolent; and he cannot, without an outrage on mercy, reason, and conscience, as well as an utter

violation of the language of Holy Scripture, be regarded as the author of sin. Yet, that in the course of human affairs there has been a vast amount of iniquity, cannot be denied; and, as this cannot be ascribed to God, there remains no other solution of the fact than that suggested by our divine Lord in the parable of the tares of the field (Matt. xiii. 28), "An enemy hath done this."

It is undoubtedly true that the introduction and the consequences of sin must have been foreseen by God from eternity, and that from eternity also his method of mercy must have been provided. There is, of course, no order of time in God's purposes; since they are all eternal, one of them cannot be either before or after another; but there must be among them an order of nature, since they have relation to successive events. These occurring not at the same moment, but successively in time, the purposes which relate to them, however formed at one and the same period, must be conceived, as to their object, to stand in a corresponding order of succession. There is no difficulty, I think, in conceiving of the purposes of God after this manner; and nothing more than this is necessary in order to place eternal purposes in harmony with successive events.

I return, then, to the position with which I set out; namely, that, somewhere in human affairs, God's great work of redemption found an occasion for itself in an outbreak or inroad of evil, of which it was intended to be remedial. The holiness and happiness of mankind were, by some adverse influence, broken in upon; and the occurrence of this mischief constituted the immediate occasion, or, as I have ventured to call it, the proximate cause, of redemption. I now proceed to ask, what was the nature of the occasion thus supplied?

In order to obtain an answer to this question, it is necessary to refer to the earliest history of our race. According to the scriptural narrative, we find our first parents placed in the garden of Eden under peculiar conditions. The garden abounded with every tree pleasant to the eyes, and good for food; but in the midst of it was one tree, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," of which their participation was prohibited under express and specific penalty. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," it was said to them, "thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou

eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Under this sentence Adam, by transgression, fell, since he took of the fruit of the tree, and did eat (Genesis iii. 3).

Great importance, of course, attaches to the right interpretation of this sentence, and a great variety of speculations have been broached in relation to it; without more particularly referring to them, however, I shall simply state my own view of the case.

It appears to me, then, that the language employed in this threatening comprehended death in the ordinary sense of the term, or the dissolution of the body. Such seems to be its natural import when used, as it is here, without qualification—"Thou shalt die." There is also a phrase in the latter part of the narrative (Gen. iii. 19) which inevitably fixes it to this meaning: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground;" that is, until thou die. Now, whatever may supposably be meant by death, it would seem clear that nothing but the dissolution of the body could be denoted by man's returning to the ground.

We can scarcely, however, stop here. We are, at least, immediately met by a fact which requires some explanation. After the eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam's prevailing state of mind was changed for the worse. Instead of a frank confession and prompt repentance, which might, in a right-minded man, have been expected naturally to follow the commission of a fault, we find a totally different result. Witness our first parent's hiding himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden, and his attempt to excuse his sin by throwing the blame of it on his partner in it. What name shall we give to the moral deterioration which had evidently taken place? Adam had manifestly lost his original rightness of spirit, and had become estranged from God. It is inevitable to suppose that this change, which is far from being the necessary or natural result of a single fault, came upon him as a part of the punishment of his sin, and was consequently included in the sentence, "Thou shalt die." This is what is called spiritual death; a metaphorical expression undoubtedly, but one aptly expressive of the total extinction of right, or holy, feeling.

We cannot satisfactorily stop even here. While Adam's offence was one which forfeited his life and depraved his

heart, it was clearly, also, adapted to subject him to divine displeasure. In form, his transgression was a breach of a positive law by eating of the forbidden fruit; but, in spirit, it was also a breach of the moral law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The obligation of the moral law must have been to Adam coeval with his being, constituting the broad basis upon which the much narrower dispensation of positive law was founded. And, as its obligation attached to him, so its penalty. Now this penalty is the wrath of God; and the wrath of God is the second death.

I cannot express my own conviction, therefore, otherwise than by saying, that the threatening denounced against our first parents included the three elements of natural, spiritual, and eternal, death. And here, with respect to them, was the proximate cause, or immediate occasion, of redemption.

It is now, not only a just, but an important and necessary question, Did the influence of our first parents' sin reach beyond themselves? And, if it did, to what extent are their posterity involved in its consequences?

It is well known that a large class of divines answer this question with great confidence in the following manner: The whole of Adam's posterity sinned in him, and fell with him, and are thus, in common with him, under the wrath of God. This doctrine they infer from Adam's position as the federal head of his race, and from the tenour of the covenant in Eden, which involved them in the results of his probation, whether evil or good.

I cannot apply to this mode of representing the matter a general expression, either of approval, or of disapproval. Part of it I admit, and part of it I repudiate. I admit the premises, but I draw back from the conclusion.

I admit the premises. I admit, that is to say, that Adam was the federal head of his race, and that the covenant of Eden involved them in the results of his probation, whether evil or good. I cannot otherwise understand the Scriptures on the one hand, or the state of the world on the other.

From the narrative in the book of Genesis, it is true, we gather only the facts of the case, without a doctrinal interpretation of them; the latter, however, is amply supplied by the apostle Paul, in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. "By one man's offence death reigned. . . . By the offence of one judgment came upon all men.

. . . By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. v. 17-19). These are declarations too plain and unequivocal to be understood otherwise (as it appears to me) than as embodying Adam's federal headship in the expression of its consequences.

And the same truth is involved in facts which are continually occurring. Why do all die, even those who have personally committed no transgression, while yet death was the wages of sin? In some sense even infants must have sinned, since infants die; yet in what sense is this possible, unless by a federal relation they are made sharers in their first father's transgression?

But, while I admit the premises thus, in my judgment, irrefragably laid, I draw back from the conclusion which, I think, has been too hastily drawn from them. It does not necessarily follow from the federal headship of Adam and the constitution of the covenant of Eden, that Adam's posterity are liable to eternal perdition for his sin; and the reason why it does not is, that there is a peculiarity in the arrangements of that covenant by which such a result is precluded. Was it not so ordered that, in the event of transgression, Adam should have no posterity? What else could be the issue of a scheme which ran thus—"In the day that thou eatest thou shalt die"? I know that this position has been not only severely questioned, but strongly denied; yet, upon the closest reconsideration, I cannot relinquish it. And I will here assign some of the reasons which constrain me to maintain it.

1. By assigning such a meaning to it, the language of the sacred historian is naturally and fairly interpreted. The words are, "In the day that thou eatest thou shalt surely die." What can be more obvious than their plain and unforced signification? And what right has any one to impose on them, or to wring out of them, a meaning unnatural?

2. Such a provision for limiting the results of transgression under the Eden covenant seems eminently congruous with divine wisdom and goodness. The unmeasured diffusion of benefits through a whole race by the virtue of their first father, is a scheme which has a noble aspect of divine benignity; the opposite, yet corresponding, issue, however, of involving a whole race in ruin because of its progenitor's fall, cannot be regarded without pain, whatever may be its

righteousness; and, if it pleased God so to order the penalty of the covenant, that, in the event of transgression, the evil should be shut up to the immediate offenders, who shall say that such a scheme was contradictory to any dictates of reason or justice? Must it not be regarded, on the contrary, as still more eminently illustrative of divine goodness and wisdom?

3. There is neither force nor satisfactoriness in any of the other modes of interpretation proposed. When, for example, it is attempted to satisfy the declaration, "In the day that thou eatest thou shalt surely die," by saying that man should be from that day mortal, the seeds of death being then sown in his frame; or when it is alleged that the penalty would be paid if Adam died within a thousand years, since, according to the apostle, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years;" one feels that such attempts are forced and unnatural, and that they are rather evasions than interpretations, even if they do not rather deserve the name of subterfuges.

These shuffling efforts are, in truth, made in presence of a difficulty, but of a difficulty the solution of which is far from requiring them. It is undoubtedly a fact that, notwithstanding this menace of immediate death, Adam lived nearly a thousand years, and that his posterity have continued in existence through many generations: and hence the supposed necessity of interpreting the terms of the menace in some way consistent with these facts. It is possible, however, that the prolonged life of Adam and his race may be accounted for on a different principle, and, if this can be done, the entire difficulty vanishes.

To the question, then, how, upon my interpretation, I account for the prolonged existence of mankind, since, according to it, in the event of Adam's transgression death was to be immediate, I reply, By the introduction of a new element into the divine dispensation towards man. I speak of the introduction of a new element not without proof, for that one was introduced is manifest on the face of the history. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise

his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. iii. 14-19).

It is remarkable that, of the sentences here finally pronounced, the first falls upon the serpent, who was no party to the probation, and to whom no portion of the covenant referred. The sentence thus pronounced on the tempter contains an express and undeniable intimation of mercy to the transgressor. It speaks of the woman's seed (of a human being, therefore), and of his bruising the serpent's head. Here is the new element of which I have spoken, for, assuredly, there was nothing of this in the covenant itself. And how materially it modified the sentences which were afterwards—and not until afterwards—pronounced on the transgressor, is manifest in the terms of them. In them death, although not done away, is removed to an indefinite distance, provision is made for the existence of posterity, and the condition is declared on which it shall be obtained; while only labour expended on an ungrateful soil is man's immediate doom. What a strange version does all this form of the brief threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thou shalt surely die"! That all these particulars can be regarded as included in that menace seems to me impossible; and, if they were not, they must have arisen out of some other system subsequently introduced, and thus brought into action.

There is no difficulty in understanding what this new element was. The whole method of salvation was shadowed forth in the metaphorical language employed. The seed of the woman can have been no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, while, in the conflict which is supposed to ensue, the bruising of his heel by the serpent is to be understood of the humiliation of the cross, and the crushing of the serpent's

head of the Redeemer's victory. It is clear, then, that immediately on Adam's transgression, and before the passing of sentence on him, the covenant of Eden was superseded by the bringing in of a new dispensation, the great dispensation of divine mercy, founded on the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason it was that Adam did not die "in the day" when he sinned, and for this reason it is that his posterity still inhabit the earth.

The condition of mankind being thus modified, we have now to ask what was its new character? Three principal points may be noticed in it.

First: The covenant of Eden, as a covenant, existed no more. Neither was Adam individually, nor his posterity after him, under its requirement, or its curse. The very existence of the race, once forfeited by transgression, now stood on a new platform, the dispensation of divine mercy through Jesus Christ.

Secondly: The covenant of Eden being thus superseded, the moral law resumed its direct bearing on mankind, who were thus to find themselves placed under what has been called the covenant of works. "The first and great commandment," "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and the second, which is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," were of indefeasible obligation; and these became the basis of that moral government to which God now subjected the human race, with a view to "render to every man according to his works," "in the day when he would judge the world in righteousness." A new probation was thus instituted, which differed from the former, not only in being carried out by a moral instead of a positive law, but also in being individual and universal. No longer regarded as the federal head of his race, Adam was now subjected to a probation for himself alone, as each of his children to the latest generation, in common with himself, would also be.

Thirdly: Some elements of the abolished system were retained under the new dispensation, as congruous with its nature and design. Among these were death, and the moral corruption, or bias to evil, inherited from Adam; but neither of these is to be regarded as now having a penal character, they are rather elements of trial fitly grafted on the new probationary system.

In pursuing this argument, I do not forget that my attention may be challenged to the explicit and peremptory language of the apostle, in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, as apparently contradictory to it. It is quite true that in this chapter the apostle asserts that "all [the children of Adam] (for the context proves this to be his meaning) have sinned;" that "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" and that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans v. 12, 18, 19). Can words make it plainer, it may be asked, that the entire race of Adam is under condemnation for Adam's sin? I thus state the objection in its full force, and, having so done, I make my reply to it.

I observe, then, that there are two ways in which this language may be interpreted. It may be understood of the actual results of the covenant of Eden, on the one hand, or of its principle and tenour apart from its actual results, on the other. Now, to understand it of the actual results of the covenant of Eden is in the highest degree unsatisfactory; not only as revoltingly in contrast with the wisdom and goodness of God, but as altogether inconsistent with other scriptural representations of the spiritual condition of mankind. According to the same apostle, in the same letter, "the wrath of God is revealed," but it is "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans i. 18), not against men as fallen in their first parent. In the second chapter he lays it down as a first principle, that God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." It is quite obvious that, in their absolute and unqualified sense, the passages thus cited contradict one another, and that, consequently, they cannot both be in such sense true. If men are to be judged by their own works, it is perfectly clear that they cannot be condemned for the sin of Adam. Driven from this mode of interpretation, therefore, we have of necessity

recourse to the other. We say that the apostle brings forward, not the actual results, but the principle and tenour, of the covenant of Eden; and his doing so is quite adequate to the purpose for which he adduces it, which is to derive from it an illustration of the covenant of redeeming mercy in its principle and tenour. As the former was of a federal and representative character, so also is the latter: under the first, "by one man's disobedience many were made [treated as] sinners;" and under the second, "by one man's obedience shall many be made [treated as] righteous." Such an interpretation of the apostle's language, while fully satisfactory in itself, leaves untouched the conclusion before arrived at, that the condemnation involved in the tenour of the covenant of Eden has not actually fallen upon mankind.

Thus far I have been engaged in establishing a negative. To the affirmation that the human race is under condemnation for Adam's sin, I answer, No. Had the covenant of Eden been strictly carried out, they would have been so; but, by the supervention of the dispensation of mercy, they are placed in a different position from that which they would have occupied under the former covenant, at once in safety from its threatenings, and under the obligations of a new and personal probation.

Proceeding with our subject, then, the question we have now to ask is, What has been the action of mankind under the bearing of the moral law?

The answer to this question is only too obvious, and too sad. According to the apostle, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans iii. 23). Listen to the testimony borne of the ancient world:

"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.
They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Psalm xiv. 2, 3.

Such as the world was it still is, and universal observation proves that multiform iniquities cover the face of it like a deluge.

Now sin is followed by the gravest and most awful consequences. These are principally two.

On the one hand, as a violation of God's righteous law sin provokes his anger, and subjects every transgressor to the

curse by the law annexed to it. Thus the apostle tells us that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men" (Romans i. 18). This result of sin is awful beyond all conception, since the wrath of God must be to man a source of inexpressible anguish. It is the principal element in the future and eternal woe.

On the other hand, sin acquires a ruling power over the heart, corrupts all the springs of action, and establishes a dominant enmity towards God. This internal mischief is a calamity second only to the wrath of God, and constitutes a source of present and future wretchedness only less deplorable. An unholy heart may be said to be itself a hell.

Here, then, is the occasion of which we have been in quest.

It is assuredly a grand and awful one. A world lying in wickedness, and passing to endless perdition! Such is the proximate cause of redemption, the occasion on which God, foreseeing the guilt and ruin of our race, has seen fit to interpose with a wise and sovereign remedy. Blessed be his name for ever!

In concluding this discourse, it cannot be unimportant for me to press the view which I have endeavoured to explain and establish on your individual and practical regard. It is familiarly taught us from our childhood that, as children of Adam, we are not only fallen, but lost, creatures, being in consequence of his sin born in a state of condemnation and wrath. Even if this were true, it must be admitted that its influence is very infelicitous. It represents our ruined condition to be our misfortune rather than our fault, and tends to foster a spirit of pride and self-justification. As a misfortune, it may be said our ruin is a mischief which we neither could have helped at first, nor can help now; and God, who permitted it to come upon us without our fault, must act what part he pleases towards us for our relief. One hardly sees what answer to make to such words, granting the basis on which they rest. If, however, dear hearer, you have gone with me in the argument through which I have led you, you will be well satisfied that this is not a true statement of the case. You will clearly understand that your relation to your first parent places you in no peril of divine displeasure; and that, if God is angry with you, it is not for Adam's sin, but exclusively for your own. Are you

not a sinner? Your pride and passion, your estrangement from God and idolatry of the world, your deeds of iniquity and wrong, are they not recorded as with a sunbeam in the book of God? And these are the things for which the wrath of God is denounced against you. Your conscience must tell you that this wrath is at once justly deserved, and unutterably awful. To perish under it were to be for ever miserable. To you, therefore, God's great work of redemption makes a touching and powerful appeal. It brings hope and salvation to you! How precious should the hope be to you, and how glad the tidings!

LECTURE II.

THE PROCURING CAUSE OF REDEMPTION—MEDIATION.

"There is . . . one mediator between God and man."—1 *Timothy* ii. 5.

IN treating of the great subject of redemption, it was natural that, regarding it as a grand remedial interposition of the Creator and Governor of the world, I should in the first instance direct your attention to that irruption of sin and misery to which it related. In doing so, I endeavoured to trace the effect of the first transgression, and to ascertain the truth of the opinion held by many, that the whole race are under wrath on account of it. This opinion we found reason to repudiate; but we found also that, by innumerable and flagrant violations of the moral law, "all have sinned," and have thus brought themselves into a state of guilt and misery unspeakable.

With a view to remedy this fearful mischief divine mercy interposes; and it is for us now to consider the scope of the interposition, and to trace the manner in which it has been effected.

It is important that we should clearly understand in the outset the scope of this remedial interposition, or what, in the contemplation of a ruined world, it has been God's intention to provide. And it is the more necessary to be careful on this point, because there is taken by some what I

cannot but deem to be a defective and erroneous view. It is strongly insisted on in some quarters, that God's design of mercy is directed primarily, if not exclusively, to the deliverance of mankind from sin, as the great, if not the only real, evil of their condition.

Now, I do not doubt for a moment that God's work of redemption is directed to the deliverance of man from sin, an issue without which it must fail altogether of securing his real happiness; but I cannot admit that it is exclusively, or even primarily, so. Whatever may be the magnitude of the mischief which sin generates in the heart and character of man—and I am far from wishing to extenuate it—it cannot, consistently with Scripture, be regarded as the only, or even as the primary, source of his wretchedness. The apostolic declaration may neither be ignored nor evaded, that “the wrath of God” is denounced against sin. This is the sinner's first and deepest calamity, and that from which he needs first and principally to be delivered; and to this end I cannot doubt the work of redemption is primarily directed. That it provides also for man's deliverance from sin is unquestionable; but it does so as a secondary result, and by means of influences evolved out of its primary bearing. It is hard, indeed, to see whence the force can be generated that is to destroy the power of sin, unless it is to be found in the grace unspeakable which first delivers from its curse. I shall proceed, then, upon the assumption that the work of redemption is in the first instance to provide for the deliverance of mankind from the consequences of sin, or from the wrath of God which it entails.

It arises out of the divine nature that the work thus undertaken is by no means simple; since the character of God consists not of one attribute exclusively, but is composed of a group of glorious perfections, which must of necessity act as a whole, and in inviolable harmony. We are contemplating an operation in which grace and holiness, righteousness and truth, are all active, and one in which, according to the Psalmist, “mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other” (Psalm lxxxv. 10). These attributes, however, have, so to speak, diverging tendencies, and this fact gives rise to the great problem of the divine administration towards man. This problem may be thus expressed:—How grace towards man can be exercised

consistently with the maintenance of holiness and righteousness? This question introduces us to the subject of the present Lecture,—the procuring cause of redemption; or the arrangements by which, in redemption, the harmonious action of the divine attributes has been secured.

In order properly to understand the attitude of the divine Being in the work of redemption, it is important to observe that he has to do with man in two characters. On the one hand, he is the Creator of mankind, the Fountain of their being, their Father, and he has to do with them as his erring and undutiful children; on the other hand, he is the moral Governor of mankind, ruling them by a system of precepts and sanctions which it has been his pleasure, as it was his right, to institute, so that he has to do with them likewise as transgressors of his law. These two characters may be distinguished from one another thus: the former is personal, arising out of God's relation to mankind as his children; the latter is official, arising out of God's relation to mankind as his subjects.

In assigning these two characters to God in relation to mankind there is nothing forced or unnatural; there is nothing, indeed, unusual. A similar fact occurs to us perpetually in human life. A person may be, and often is, both a parent and a magistrate; and, by supposition, he may have to do with a case of misbehaviour in both characters, since his own son may commit an act violating at once his filial duty and his country's law. In such a case, one person must act as distinctly in two characters as if he were two men, and in the two characters he must pursue different courses: as a magistrate, he must administer the law of his country; as a father, he has to maintain the discipline of his household. It is true that, in such a case, an afflicted and tender-hearted father might endeavour to throw the administration of justice into other hands, where it might at once give less pain, and insure a more manifest impartiality; but in the case of the divine Being, as this cannot be, so it need not be. It is necessary for God to act in both characters, and we shall find that he has actually done so.

Now, in following out these two characters of Parent and Judge, although the offence to be dealt with is one, and the end to be arrived at is one, God has to pursue widely different courses. That which an offended father may and will do,

necessarily differs greatly from that which an acting magistrate may and must do. In the two cases the principles of action differ, the rules of action differ, and the modes of action must likewise differ.

The respective attitudes of Father and moral Governor bring into play different attributes of the divine character, or, it may perhaps be said, one grand attribute in different aspects. The essential rectitude of God's nature operates in both; appearing in his personal character as holiness, in his official character as righteousness. What we shall have to ascertain, therefore, is this: in the first place, in what manner the exercise of grace towards man is rendered consistent with the holiness of God, or with his personal character; and, in the second place, in what manner the exercise of grace towards man is rendered consistent with the righteousness of God, or with his official character. Now, in the Scriptures, two systems of divine procedure are presented to us, adapted respectively to these ends; the one is a system of mediatorial interposition, the other is a system of expiatory sacrifice. Our inquiry into the procuring cause of redemption, therefore, divides itself at once into two parts, the one relating to mediation, the other to expiation. The former of these will occupy our present attention.

That a system of mediation between himself and his guilty creatures of mankind has been established by the God of all grace, is too plainly manifest in the Holy Scriptures to need formal proof. It is enough to prepare the way for the inquiry on which we are entering, to cite the emphatic declaration of the apostle, "There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

I. In treating the subject which thus comes before us, it will be proper, in the first place, to obtain some general idea of mediation itself. It is a process known to us in other cases besides the transactions of God with man, and will be best understood in this higher reference by analogies drawn from human affairs.

Speaking in the most general terms, a case of mediation supposes the presence of two parties more or less at variance one with another, so that there is both scope and occasion for the intervention of a third party in the character of a common friend.

The cases by which this general idea might be illustrated

are of almost endless variety, and we may look upon several before we shall find one in all respects applicable to our purpose.

In one instance, for example, mutual offence may have been given, and both parties may be in the wrong, each being so tenacious of his own position that neither will begin to make concession. Then it will be the office of a mutual friend, acting as mediator, to endeavour to pacify both, and to become the medium through which concessions may be mutually and simultaneously made.

In another instance the wrong may be on one side, and on the other a degree of resentment for the moment implacable. The function of a common friend as mediator here will be to use his endeavours, on the one hand, to convince the wrongdoer of his fault, and induce him to apologize; and, on the other, to mollify the temper of the offended party, and induce him to accept the apology tendered.

In a third instance we may find, as before, the wrong on one side, but on the other a benevolent spirit without resentment. In this case it may be said there can be no need of mediation, inasmuch as the offence may be at once forgiven. Yet we can conceive grounds on which, entirely apart from resentment, a difficulty may be felt. The offended party may say—"It is not that I am implacable, or that I at all resent the insult; on the contrary, I sincerely pity the offender, and would gladly release him from the serious consequences of his fault; but I cannot with any wisdom exercise a direct and unqualified act of forgiveness, for I have a character and position to sustain which would be sacrificed by such a course. I cannot even see him." Here it is conceivable that a common friend may interpose, and say, "Will you allow me to be the medium of communication with this unhappy culprit, to tell him of your kindly feeling, and, if I can restore him to a better mind, to bring back his regrets to you?" Such a proposition might meet with a favourable response: "Do so; and tell him that through you I will communicate with him freely, and for your sake I will show him all the kindness he needs." Something like this is of occasional occurrence in the family circle, where, in order to maintain a proper authority over some filial rebel, one of the parents may, for salutary discipline, constitute the other a mediator, through whom forgiveness shall be conveyed.

And now, without detaining ourselves with further illustration, let us approach the actual mediation between God and man.

Here assuredly all the wrong is on one side. God has done no wrong to man; while man is far estranged from God, and shows his alienation by a grievous array of wicked works. And God, although justly displeased, cherishes no resentment of man's offence, but is infinitely willing to forgive. Why, then, it may be asked, does he not forgive, and allow a penitent sinner to pour out his regrets in his immediate presence? Why should he put some one else between, as the only medium through whom he will hold communication with the offender, thus instituting a system of mediation which evidently wears a frown, and keeps man at a distance?

To this question I answer, that the attitude which God assumes in the system of mediation is due to his holiness. He "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Simply to pass by iniquity of so aggravated a character as is stamped on human transgression, would be to stain his own name, and to forfeit his position in the moral universe. With a just regard to the purity of his nature he cannot do it, he ought not to do it, he will not do it. In relation to his burning jealousy of his holiness we may understand the scriptural expression, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29), and nothing impure can with safety approach him but through a mediator. If he forgives, it must be in a way which guards his honour by demonstrating that he does not think lightly of sin, but hates it with a perfect hatred.

The necessity under which God lies of maintaining his purity unsullied, however, does not diminish his pity toward the sinner, or his readiness to forgive; it only modifies the channel through which his kindness shall flow. A problem arises for him to solve; and, in his infinite wisdom, he solves it by devising and instituting a system of mediation. He selects one who has an interest in both parties (a common friend), authorizes him as mediator to open communication with a guilty world, and to declare God's merciful intentions, together with the conditions on which they will be fulfilled.

The ends answered by such a system in relation to God's holiness are two. First, a medium of intercourse is constituted which, being indirect, or through a third party, does

not bring God into immediate contact with man—the pure into direct communication with the impure. Through a mediator God can both speak to, and hear from, the unholy, without either stain or offence.

Secondly, a ground of action is constituted on which forgiveness may be honourably granted. The party selected as mediator being a friend of God, he is regarded as having the influence of a friend with him, so that, while the offender deserves no regard, for the mediator's sake he may be forgiven. It is thus that a holy God will find a reason for the exercise of his mercy, without exposing himself to be charged with thinking lightly of sin.

The problem thus solved, and the difficulty thus provided for, grace may have free scope for its most unbounded exercise. Through the Mediator a free and full pardon may be proclaimed, and a touching persuasive appeal may be made; while, in order to do the Mediator honour, privileges may be conferred involving more blessedness than transgression ever forfeited. Thus grace reigns, and shall be glorified.

And yet, under the system of mediation, the triumph of grace is limited at two points. First, the benefit proposed is still proposed upon a condition. The condition being simply that the offender should accept the mediation instituted, it ought, indeed, to be considered the easiest possible, and to be accepted with the liveliest gratitude; it is, however, a condition to be fulfilled. Secondly, the rejection of the condition leaves the offender to his ruin. In this event, even grace is silent and submissive; nothing then remains but “a fearful looking for of vengeance.” So holiness also reigns, and is, even in this blessed companionship with mercy, the still dominant attribute of Deity.

II. Having taken this general view of the system of mediation as inwrought into the divine administration towards mankind, let us now look at it more in detail, and with a view to the particular features of the work of Christ, by whom the office of mediator is held.

The adequacy and excellency of any system of mediation depend on the fitness of the mediator for the functions which he has to discharge. He must possess, on the one hand, a fitness to represent each party to the other, the offended to the offender, and the offender to the offended; and, on the other, a fitness to supply a ground of action for

the merciful proceeding of which his mediation is intended to be the basis. In all these particulars we shall discern the glory of his work who is the “one mediator between God and man.”

In the first place, a mediator should possess a fitness to represent the parties interested one to another.

And first, the offended to the offender. It is, of course, necessary to a satisfactory method of mediation, that the offended party should be represented by one suitable to act on his behalf, both in the dignity of his person, in the rectitude of his character, in the perfection of his knowledge, in care for his employer's honour, and in kindness of spirit towards the offender. A failure in either of these points would tend to render the entire process feeble, or unsatisfactory. Let us glance at the mediation of Christ in relation to all these particulars.

Behold the dignity of his person! He must be a glorious being to speak for the King of kings. Who shall undertake such an embassy? Not the loftiest of the angels in heaven can aspire so high. Yet Christ is adequate to it, for he is the Son of God. In his own nature essentially divine, he is of equal glory with the Father; while, accepting an economical inferiority, he brings into his position as mediator all his essential dignity. In communicating to a rebellious race through such a medium the eternal God fully maintains his honour.

Contemplate the rectitude of his character! He who interposes on behalf of offenders must not himself offend; such a stain would totally incapacitate him for his office. But in Christ is no sin. His divine nature is of necessity infinitely pure; nor was his human nature stained, either with original corruption, or with actual transgression. He stood thus in unsullied innocence. He was well qualified to represent the purity of his Father.

Dwell upon the perfection of his knowledge! Who could fathom the depths of the Infinite Mind, or adequately convey to others, or even comprehend for himself, the thoughts towards man of the Eternal One? In this respect every creature must stand aloof, and acknowledge an utter incapacity. But again Christ is equal to his task. Not less than his Father's, his mind also is infinite. He is able to understand all his Father's feelings respecting human transgression,

and to convey to man, so far as mediation requires, even his deepest thoughts. By his divine nature he sees everything as his Father sees it, and is qualified at once to receive and impart a correct impression of all his Father's views; while, in his human nature, he is in perfect sympathy with the mind of man, and in command of every method of communication with him.

Observe his care for his Father's honour! On such a point, indeed, every holy nature would be careful; and yet no created being could be deemed secure from a weakness which might yield up a portion of God's prerogative to the seeming interest of a rebellious creature. In this respect the qualification of Christ is perfect. His heart beats in absolute unison with his Father's. Their interests are essentially one, and the interests of the Father, consequently, are safe in the hands of the Son. His jealousy for his Father's honour burns like a hallowed fire; nor, even if it cost him humiliation and death, will he suffer any reproach to fall on that holy and glorious name. The dearest and the most delicate of all interests may safely be trusted in his hands.

And remark, finally, his spirit of kindness towards man. So blameworthy an offender as man it had been hard for holy beings to pity; their righteous anger might have burned irrepressibly. Yet pity was necessary, and in Christ it was found. The infinite love of the Father had its perfect counterpart in his bosom, and not less intensely than the offended party himself did he pity the offender; while, in addition, the sympathies of his human nature contributed their influence, and he pitied guilty men as his kindred, with more than even a brother's love.

Thus regarded in the varied glories of his person, our blessed Redeemer stands out as pre-eminently fitted to represent God to man. We shall find him, in the second place, not less eminently fitted to represent man to God.

It must, of course, be considered suitable, if not imperative, that, in such a process of mediation as we have now before us, the interests of the guilty should be represented by one of their own nature, and of a similar relation to God, that he might be able fully to enter into their condition, and to plead for them as one of themselves. Yet, in consequence of the universality of human transgression, it is not

possible to find any one of the race who can be admitted to plead for his fellows, each needing rather an intercessor for himself. In this instance, the mysterious but glorious fact of the incarnation of the Son of God fills up a chasm which had otherwise been impassable. Christ is not less truly and strictly human, than he is divine. "The man Christ Jesus" is the "mediator between God and man." He thus represents the guilty to God with an admirable perfection. Although not himself an offender, he is one of the offending race, and in pleading for them he pleads for his brethren, for those for whom he has a brother's right to plead.

And Christ has not only a brother's right, but a brother's heart. As a brother he loves, even the guilty; and while "he knoweth our frame," and can thoroughly understand our weaknesses and our sorrows, since he himself is "partaker of flesh and blood," he throws into his intercession the whole fervour of fraternal compassion, and says for us all, and more than all, we could possibly have said for ourselves.

Thus perfectly is Christ, as mediator between God and man, fitted to represent both parties to each other; and we shall find him equally qualified to supply a ground for the intended exercise of mercy.

For Christ, as the Son of God, possesses a high and glorious standing in the estimation of his Father. Infinite, indeed, is the complacency of the Father in the Son, as the adequate reflection of his own glory; or, in the words of the apostle, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He is God's "only-begotten" Son, and he "is in the bosom of the Father." God will do much to gratify and honour such an intercessor.

There is also another ground of the Father's love to the Son. It is the filial affection and devotedness, the blended zeal and fidelity, with which Christ undertook, and has executed, the work of expiation confided to his hands. All that he gave up of heavenly glory, all that he bore of earthly sorrow and of hellish malice, has laid his Father under an obligation of recompense, which shall neither be forgotten nor inadequately discharged. "Therefore doth my Father love me," said Christ, "because I lay down my life for the sheep." "Therefore," according to the apostle, "hath God highly exalted him," because "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Here is the meritorious consideration of which the mercy shown to man is to be the counterpart. For such a love the Father will do everything that he asks; no mercy that he can solicit for the world will do him more honour than the Father is willing to render him.

In this manner a ground is laid for the exercise of divine mercy at once honourable to God, and independent of man. It is shown for Christ's sake, not for their own.

In thus exhibiting the scope and object of the mediatorial system, it will naturally be remarked that I have not enumerated an expiatory sacrifice for sin as one of its elements. I may now say that I have purposely omitted it, because expiation does not belong to a system of mediation, nor is it appropriate to the personal character of God, of which mediation is a development. In my next discourse, when I shall treat of the official character of God, and the maintenance of his government, I shall have this subject directly before me, and I shall endeavour to do ample justice to it; but, for the present, I say distinctly, and I wish to be distinctly understood, that, so far as God is personally concerned, bloodshedding is neither required by him in order to his forgiveness of sins, nor influential with him to the granting of it. His holiness is satisfied by the employment of a mediator, which, as I have shown, provides at once a medium of communication and a ground of action, both of them consistent with its unsullied maintenance.

III. Having thus considered the general nature of mediation, and the particular excellencies of the mediation of Christ, let us now observe in what manner this system has been carried into effect.

The mediation of Christ undoubtedly had a place in the counsels of God. In the clear foresight of human iniquity, it was the eternal purpose of God that his mercy should thus interpose. In his deep and unfathomable thoughts of love the plan was devised and matured, the consent of the Son of God obtained, and his recompense secured; so that, on the outbreak of sin, there was no surprise, nor want of preparation. All things were ready, and the scheme could at once be brought into operation.

And, on the occurrence of human transgression, it was brought at once into operation. The brief history in the third chapter of Genesis clearly demonstrates this. The

threatening of the covenant of Eden was immediately modified by the beneficent permission of a world's life, instead of immediate death, and by the gracious announcement of the woman's seed, by whom the head of the serpent should be bruised. So far the system of mercy operated on the instant, and opportunity was thus secured for the development of all its details.

The plan was further carried out "in the fulness of time," by the mission of Christ into the world. He took on himself our offending nature. Most congruous with his design was the aspect of his personal ministry, for he came "to seek and to save that which was lost." By innumerable deeds of divine compassion and power he demonstrated his commission to interpose, and his ability to redeem. On the cross he effected the grand display of his filial love which was to constitute the prevalence of his plea in heaven. And thus he accomplished all of which it was necessary that this world should be the theatre, after which he tranquilly awaited his removal to a different scene.

The ascension of Christ into heaven marked another step in his progress. His period of humiliation had now passed, and he was placed in a position of dignity and power. He "sat down at the right hand of God," and commenced his actual intercession with his Father. There he ever liveth, to make intercession for all that come unto God through him; and, in addition to this work of love, he takes up the whole scope of his Father's purposes of grace, and sues out all the promises. He pleads, and he prevails; for him the Father heareth always.

And the scheme is carried to its completion by Christ's elevation to a throne. His Father has constituted a mediatorial kingdom, of which Christ is the head. As mediator he sits upon his throne, and wields both a sceptre and a sword. To his hands the Father has committed the achievement of all the conquests and deeds of mercy which his heart has planned, and his own might shall work out in glory the salvation of which he so deeply laid the basis in his shame. His gospel, his providence, and his Spirit, constitute a blended instrumentality and agency, by which he "is able to subdue all things unto himself." This grand scheme of operation will be finally wound up in the proceedings of the great day, when Christ will perform his last mediatorial act

in the judgment of the world; after which, and amidst the glorious completion of all his objects, he shall resign the kingdom to his Father, "that God may be all in all."

Such, as I apprehend it, both in its general character and its particular features, is the system of mediation which God has instituted, in order to provide for the restoration of offending man to his favour. There are evident traces of this system in the language of Scripture, apart from the cases in which it is expressly mentioned. The exercise of repentance belongs to it, and so does also the forgiveness of sins, together with the filial privileges of the forgiven sinner. It had its shadow in the Jewish priesthood, in the intercession of the high priest within the veil, and in the incense which afforded "an odour of a sweet smell."

I am aware that in this discourse I have given an idea of God's character which differs considerably from that presented by some popular and influential divines; and the difference is so important that I wish, before concluding, to draw particular attention to it. What I have now in view will be clearly exhibited to you in the following verses of Dr. Watts:—

"Come, let us lift our joyful eyes
Up to the courts above,
And smile to see our Father there
Upon a throne of love.

"Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame;
Our God appeared 'consuming fire,'
And vengeance was his name.

"Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood
That calmed his frowning face,
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace."

HYMN 108, BOOK II.

Now I wish to be exceeded by no man in a high and affectionate estimate of Dr. Watts, and his invaluable contributions to our public devotion; but I cannot deem myself justly liable to censure, in pointing out what I conceive to be at once an unscriptural and an injurious representation of the divine character. I am not going to complain of the use of the terms "vengeance" and "consuming fire," which, in their proper connexion, are scriptural; the radical mistake

and infelicity of the verses lie in attaching the severity which is appropriate to God's official character to his personal character, to which it is not appropriate, or in confounding the Father with the Judge. As a Father, God never had a "frowning face," requiring to be calmed by "drops of blood;" nor did he ever cherish "wrath," to be by such a process "turned to grace." Rather, our Father, though justly offended, was always infinitely kind. His holiness required the interposition of a mediator, indeed, but nothing more; and the Mediator, far from inspiring his mercy, is but the representative of it. Deeply is it to be regretted that a want of discrimination should have led such estimable and influential divines as the class to which Dr. Watts belongs thus, unintentionally, to misrepresent the Most High; but those writers do a still greater injustice who avail themselves of such mistakes to reproach the Gospel itself. What men, even good men, say of God is, after all, to be distinguished from what God says of himself. Even our favourite hymn-book has not with us the authority of the Bible. Let us only be cautious lest it should, unawares to us, insinuate sentiments which the Bible will not sanction, and so make our devotional pleasures conducive to our misleading.

The practical application of which our subject is susceptible is both extensive and important.

First, the system of mediation places in a very serious light the condition of a sinner. Kind as its aspect is towards him, there is something in the mode in which kindness is displayed telling him that both his sin and its consequences are of the gravest nature. "You have so sinned," it says to him, "as to cut yourself off from all direct intercourse with a holy God. He will communicate with you, indeed, and that in mercy, but only through a mediator. You are too vile for his holy eyes to endure your direct access. Your immediate approach would subject him to a pollution which he could not bear." Should we not thus learn to understand and appreciate our condition by sin, and to cultivate the spirit of self-abasement which the method of our redemption enjoins?

Secondly, guilty and polluted as we are, the aspect of the mediatorial system is in the highest degree encouraging to us. What if we have to approach this holy Lord God, whose jealousy for his holiness burns like a consuming fire? There

is a Mediator of infinite dignity and excellence, through whom we may draw nigh, not only without dread, but with assurance of a welcome. God has placed Jesus in the midst in order that he may dispense mercy; and "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." There is neither peril nor doubt, therefore, if we will submit to the divine appointment, and come to God through Jesus. The acceptance of his mediation is the sole condition on which our reconciliation depends.

And surely this condition ought not to be considered a hard one. Nor toils, nor tears, nor prayers, does it demand. It is free from everything that might be burdensome to the most guilty and the most helpless. It is in every respect most congruous with the feelings of a contrite heart; and it can meet with no opposition within us, but such as may spring from a still-cherished estrangement from God. It ought to delight us to be able to approach God acceptably on his own terms, let them be what they may, for all the right is on his side; but, more especially, it ought to delight us to be able to approach him in a method which amply provides for the glory of his holiness. Why should we wish him to show kindness to us in a way by which his name would be dishonoured? If, however, it should be so that we scruple at the humiliation required of us, and find the mediation fatally unpalatable to us, it is for us to remember that our refusal of it is our perdition, and that our ruin is upon our own heads. There is no other way to God. "No man," said Christ, "cometh unto the Father but by me."

Thirdly, disconsolate and despairing sinners may here find relief for all their fears. It may be admitted that your offences have been many and aggravated, and that you deserve nothing at the hands of God but everlasting banishment and displeasure. Yet see who speaks to you! It is not the Father whom you dread to approach, but his Son whom he has commissioned to declare to you his mercy, and whom he has sent to bring you nigh; his Son, whom he loves with an infinite complacency, and for whose sake he will exercise overflowing grace; his Son who, like the Father, pities you, and who, in order that he might at once convince you of his pity and plead for you like a brother, has become your brother by the assumption of your nature.

You can approach *him*. You can speak to *him*. You can confide in *him*. O cast away every fear, and come to Jesus! He will introduce you to the Father, his Father and your Father, his God and your God.

LECTURE III.

THE PROCURING CAUSE OF REDEMPTION—EXPIATION.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 *Corinthians* v. 21.

WE shall this evening pursue our consideration of the great problem of God’s administration towards man, the necessary combination and harmony of the divine attributes in the work of redemption. In our last Lecture we found that this problem divided itself into two parts, inasmuch as in redemption God appears in two characters, the one personal and the other official; and we then treated of the former of these, showing that the exercise of grace towards man is rendered harmonious with the personal character of God by a system of mediation. We have now to advance to the second portion of our subject, and to inquire how the exercise of grace towards man is rendered harmonious with God’s official character.

It is not needful to adduce proof at large that God does sustain an official character towards mankind. The great principle is plainly laid down by the apostle in Romans ii. 6, that God “will render to every man according to his works.” His preceptive will is expressed in the law, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. xxii. 37, 39); and the sanctions by which this law is to be enforced are unequivocally declared in the following terms,—“Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; . . . but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good” (Romans ii. 9, 10). These are evidently features, not of a parental administration arising out of God’s creation of mankind, but of a system of moral government added to it, and founded upon it.

In the institution of such a system there is involved the creation of an office, namely, that of ruler, or moral governor, which God holds; an office of large significance and of high responsibility, and one which it becomes a matter of infinite moment for God to execute in full accordance with its nature and obligations. What, then, is required in the administrator of a judicial system—a magistrate—a judge? That he should execute righteous judgment; nothing more, and nothing less. The law is laid down for his guidance, and he has simply, but strictly, to administer it in righteousness.

Such, then, is the sum of the requisitions which God's position and office as a ruler make upon him. And since, as Judge of all the earth, he must do right, the attribute of his character which is brought into play by this office is his righteousness. Now the righteousness of God is near akin to his holiness, both of them being modifications of the essential rectitude of his being. I may venture, perhaps, to distinguish them thus: holiness is rectitude in personal affairs, righteousness is rectitude in judicial proceedings.

Let us now regard mankind as placed under this system of moral government, and as having under it become transgressors of the law. By transgression of the law they have become liable to the penalty attached to disobedience, and, in due course of judicial proceedings, this penalty will be inflicted. Under these circumstances, however, "the grace of God bringeth salvation." It is the impulse of God's heart to deliver the transgressors of his law from its penalty. But an impediment occurs. In this case God is to act as a magistrate, and a magistrate may not give way to his benevolent impulses. He is under obligation, and must act according to law. And the question thus comes up before us, How is this impediment to be removed, and the exercise of grace towards the transgressor to be rendered consistent with judicial righteousness? It is this difficulty which we say is solved by a system of expiation.

There is clearly no scope for misapprehension respecting the nature of the difficulty itself. Nothing can be supposed to exist in the mind of a judge of the nature of personal anger, or resentment, or unwillingness to forgive. He sits simply as administrator of the law, and personal feeling has no scope. It is rather to be presumed that he is characterized by a sentiment of general benevolence, which would

be gratified by the transgressor's release, although that sentiment is not there allowed to be his guide. The difficulty which arises in the way of showing mercy springs from a sense of obligation and necessity. The magistrate has to say, "As a judge I must do right; I have neither option nor liberty." He is thus led to the punishment of the offender, not by his desire to punish, but by a sense of duty. And this sense of duty resists all pleas of pity, inasmuch as the maintenance of the law is a matter of much greater importance than the happiness of the criminal, which in such a case is even benevolently, as well as righteously, subordinated to the welfare of the community. The maintenance of law, indeed, is the first principle of social order; and it were better that there should be no government than that this should not be preserved.

These remarks are, as I understand the case, strictly applicable to the divine Being as the moral governor of the world.

I. Let us pursue our treatment of the subject, by asking hypothetically how such a difficulty as that which I have described *might* be treated.

We will venture to indulge our imagination so far as to suppose that we see a court of justice sitting, a criminal arraigned, convicted, and about to be condemned. There is now a pause in the proceedings, and one whom the court profoundly respects interposes on behalf of the culprit. It is Mercy, and she shall be heard. But what is her object? Assuredly, neither to abrogate justice, nor to find fault with the law. Even Mercy herself knows that the law broken is righteous, and that, in every well-ordered government, all violations of law must be punished, and every transgressor dealt with accordingly. She does not, however, abandon hope, and her interposition takes a different direction. She asks, Is it necessary that the transgressor should be dealt with in his own person? If it be answered decisively that *it is*, Mercy acknowledges that the sinner is lost beyond recovery, and she interferes no further; but, if not—if it is admitted that the idea of dealing with another in his stead might by any possibility be entertained—then a gleam of hope flashes on her brow, and the way is opened for further investigation. And these questions now arise.

Here is, first, a question for sovereignty; namely, whether,

under any modification of details, the idea of admitting a substitute for the transgressor can be entertained.

I am aware that this question cannot be entertained by an ordinary magistrate, who is but a subordinate functionary, sitting to administer the law as it is laid down for him. A reference may be made, however, to the monarch in whose name he sits, and in whose breast a measure of sovereignty lies sufficient to authorize, within certain limits, and for high purposes of state, occasional modifications of the judicial system. I conceive the question, then, put to the supreme authority, whether, in a case described, a criminal may be dealt with, not in his own person, but in the person of a substitute. And the answer may be supposed to be in substance this: That a transgressor would be dealt with in his own person naturally, but not necessarily; that, while character cannot be transferred, legal liabilities may; so that the idea of a substitute is not absolutely inadmissible, provided that one appears in all respects suitable, and that the proceeding thus modified shall answer equally well all the purposes of government. The reason on which such an answer would be founded may be thus expressed—that the purpose of government does not relate so much to the individual as to the state, the welfare of which requires only that the law should be upheld in honour, and that the sovereign authority may permit any modification of the judicial system which is compatible with the security of this object.

Here arises, then, secondly, a question of wisdom and expedients; namely, whether, substitution being admissible, a fitting substitute can be found. The general principle being decided, all the interest is concentrated now on the discovery of the qualified individual. The thing required is the due execution of the law in such a manner that the law itself shall be upheld in honour, and no encouragement be given to further transgression of it. There are obviously four attributes which a substitute capable of answering these ends must possess. In the first place, the substitute must be under the same government as the criminal; in the second place, he must himself be innocent of crime; in the third place, he must hold some near relation to the criminal; and, in the fourth place, he must be a person of social distinction. Without the first of these qualifications his substitution could not be properly tendered; without the second it could

not be properly accepted; without the third it would be wanting in title; and without the fourth it would be wanting in influence. With these qualifications, however, it would seem that a substitute need not be rejected.

And here arises, thirdly, a question of judicial procedure. On the appearance of the qualified substitute in court, the action of the law might thus proceed. First, by his formal acceptance of the criminal's place, with his own consent, and with the consent of the judge acting under the expressed authority of the crown. Secondly, by the infliction on him of the punishment due to the convicted criminal, on the ground of such substitution, and by the imputation, or reckoning, to him, as though he had committed it, of the actual offence. And, finally, the transgressor, on his signification of his acceptance of this benevolent interposition, may be released from condemnation as if he himself had suffered it, and restored without imputation to society; treated legally as a righteous man, through the imputation to him of another's righteousness.

On such a supposition as that which, in its successive stages, I have now sketched, the effect desired would be produced. On the one hand, law is vindicated, and government maintained. The transgressor, indeed, is not punished, but released; but, by the sanctioned punishment of a veritable substitute in his stead, an equal honour has been rendered to the government, and its grand purpose in relation to the community has been equally well answered. Not less effectually has the great lesson been read to all, that crime cannot be committed with impunity. On the other hand, Mercy attains her object. By the scheme of substitution she has obtained the liberation of the criminal, and his restoration to a position of legal righteousness.

Such is our hypothetical conception of the method—or of one method, at least—by which the problem of harmonizing mercy with justice may be solved; a method, we venture to think, alike effectual for all its objects, and honourable to all parties concerned in it.

II. It may be said, however, that this is mere hypothesis, and carries no weight with it unless proved by Scripture to be the course actually adopted. I fully admit this; and I will now, therefore, direct your attention to some passages of Holy Writ tending to show us what God has really done.

1. Mark, in the first place, some express declarations.

Begin with that which I have taken as the text of this discourse. God "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The assertion that God made Christ "*to be sin*" is undoubtedly a very strong one, and in its letter incredible, inasmuch as it is impossible; it must be understood in some qualified sense. And another passage of Scripture will guide us to the necessary qualification. Some men are said to "make God a liar" (1 John i. 10); that is, clearly, to treat him as if he were one by refusing to believe him. In like manner God is said to make Christ sin, or a sinner, or to treat him as if he were one, by inflicting the punishment due to one upon him. And, if he treated him as if he had been a sinner "for us," it was in our stead, or as our substitute. So, on the contrary, when God is said to make us "righteousness," or righteous persons, the meaning is that he treats us as if we were righteous persons—and this "in Christ," or by virtue of his substitution for us.

Take the words of another apostle: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24). "On the tree," that is, when he suffered on the cross, Christ "bare our sins." There is no sense in which the phrase *bearing sin* can be understood, but that of bearing its punishment; and this accordingly is the sense in which the phrase frequently occurring in the Old Testament, "He shall bear his iniquity," is evidently to be taken. Christ, therefore, when he suffered on the cross, bore in his own person the punishment of our sins. Such a declaration surely makes it necessary to suppose a process of substitution, without which the punishment of one for the iniquity of another is an outrage upon all justice, and an impossibility to a righteous judge.

Or let me cite a somewhat longer passage:—"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe (for there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God); being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his right

eousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Romans iii. 21-26).

Without attempting here a detailed criticism of this passage, it will be sufficient to say that by "the righteousness of God," mentioned at the beginning of it, the apostle means God's method of treating sinners as if they were righteous. This, he tells us, is based on "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [an expiatory sacrifice] through faith in his blood;" and this he has done that he might, in the very exercise of mercy, "declare his righteousness, that he might be a just God and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Here the apostle propounds, in almost identical terms, the very problem which we have in our contemplation—namely, How God can be just and yet justify the ungodly; and the solution of it which he presents is precisely that which our hypothesis contains. He has set forth his Son as an expiatory sacrifice for our sins, so treating him as if he had been a sinner, in order that he may treat us as if we were righteous, upon believing in his name. The doctrine of substitution is, I conceive, intimately and inevitably implied in this statement.

The language of the Old Testament is in entire accordance with that of the New.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions,
Was smitten for our iniquities;
The chastisement by which our peace is effected was laid upon him,
And by his bruises we are healed.
We all of us like sheep have strayed,
We have turned aside every one to his own way;
And Jehovah hath made to light upon him the iniquity of us all."
Isaiah liii. 5, 6. *LOWTH'S Translation.*

It will not be needful to vindicate the application of this language of the evangelical prophet to the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is sufficient to press on your notice the distinct and unequivocal manner in which his expiatory sorrows are declared to have been borne for us, as "the chastisement of our peace."

2. Allow me to direct your attention to a second source of proof. The Hebrew ritual was "a shadow of good things to come," and the dim outlines of the ancient time are now

vividly illuminated by Gospel light. "Behold," said John the Baptist, when he wished to exhibit forcibly to the Jews the true character of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John i. 29.) Here is an undeniable reference to the daily lamb offered in the Jewish service; and this, like many similar offerings in that ritual, was a sacrifice for sins proceeding avowedly on the principle of substitution. The lamb had committed no sin, its blood was shed for the sins of the people. What less, then, could John's meaning be than this, that Jesus also was about to be offered on a similar principle, to "take away the sin of the world"?

A passage of similar import occurs in the epistle to the Hebrews. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 13, 14.)

"The blood of Christ" as shed on Calvary, is here compared to that of the "bulls and goats" poured out at the Jewish altar. Now no one can doubt the vicarious, or substitutionary, character of the Jewish sacrifices; and, if any just analogy be admitted, a similar character cannot be denied to the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour.

3. A third source of evidence on this subject may be briefly adverted to.

In the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the apostle draws a very instructive parallel between Adam, our first parent, and Christ, whom he elsewhere calls "the second Adam." "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans v. 18, 19).

In a former Lecture I have referred to this passage as supplying evidence of the principle on which the covenant of Eden was established, and as showing it to have been a principle of federal relation, or, to use another word, of substitution. Adam stood before God for his posterity, to whom the effects of his conduct, obedient or disobedient, were to extend. "By one man's disobedience many were

made sinners," or treated as if they had been sinners. Such is the principle, likewise, of the dispensation of mercy; in which the second Adam stands as representative of the race, and according to which "by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous," or treated as if they were righteous.

These converging lines of evidence make it, I think, clear beyond any reasonable doubt, that the principle of substitution which I have hypothetically explained, is that on which God has really acted in the redemption of mankind.

III. Let us now look at this subject practically, and see how in detail the work of Christ corresponds with the general conception we have formed of it, as based on his substitution for the guilty.

1. The first point we find here to notice relates to his qualifications as a substitute.

It might have seemed a problem of vast and insuperable difficulty to find one who should possess all the qualifications required for such a position, and, in truth, the solution of it is due to nothing less than infinite wisdom. It must be one of human race, and yet, by the universal iniquity of that race, every individual of it is sternly excluded. It is necessary, therefore, to introduce a foreign personality, and at the same time to invest it with the conditions of humanity. To effect this would have overtaken the resources of all created wisdom; or, if the method had been guessed at, the work would have transcended all created power. All the difficulties are overcome, however, by the incarnation of the Son of God, and the mysterious combination of the two natures, the divine and the human, in one person, "God manifest in the flesh." When he appears as the sinner's substitute, every claim is satisfied.

Is it required that the substitute should be a subject of the same government as the transgressor? Behold Jesus, "made of a woman, and made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." He was made in fashion as a man, and took upon himself the form of a servant, that he might become obedient unto death. Although not a member of our race by ordinary generation, he nevertheless truly assumed our nature with all its obligations, and, as our substitute, was "one chosen out of the people." It was, consequently, no impertinence in him to offer to stand in our stead.

Is it required that the substitute should be free from crime? Behold Jesus, "in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." "Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," he had taken no part in the general, and, with this sole exception, the universal, rebellion. No charge had the broken law against him, nor had it any reason to assign why his innocent life should not be accepted in lieu of the guilty.

Is it required that the substitute should hold a near relation to the criminal? Behold Jesus, who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. No stranger is he, but a brother born for adversity; or, to take an illustration from Hebrew law, he is our near kinsman, who has a right to redeem. Drawn by the tie of relative love to interfere on our behalf, his relation to us constitutes a claim to which indulgence may well be allowed.

Is it required that the substitute should be a person of social distinction? Behold Jesus, in possession of dignity without a parallel. As the son of David and heir to David's throne, he held no mean rank among his fellows; but, as the Son of God, in possession of glories essentially divine, he rose to an immeasurable elevation. Assuredly, if he stood in the sinner's place, the execution of the law upon him would yield it a vindication more than adequate to become the basis of the sinner's release. For the value of his obedience many might well be treated as righteous.

2. The second point to be adverted to here relates to the nature of Christ's sufferings. It is, of course, implied in the general conception of substitution, that the penalty inflicted on the substitute shall be that which was due to the criminal; and the strict carrying out of this analogy leads to the idea that Christ bore the very punishment to which sinners were exposed. To this idea it has been strongly objected that Christ *could not* bear the very sufferings which constitute the punishment of sinners, since these include remorse and depravity, to which the bosom of the Holy One must of necessity be a stranger. Hence the death of Christ for mankind has been regarded by some divines as a great moral spectacle, wherein God displays in a general way his displeasure against sin. To me this view has never been satisfactory. The idea of substitution would appear to be thus abandoned, and a material injustice to be done to the

plan of redemption ; while the ground laid for such a representation may be said to be nothing better than a mistake. That, in their state of ultimate misery, sinners will feel both remorse and depravity I do not for a moment doubt ; but I cannot see why either of these should be regarded as constituent elements of the punishment of sin. That which “is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men,” is “the wrath of God,” not the ensuing depravity and remorse. Now “the wrath of God,” that is to say, the sense of God’s displeasure, is a sorrow which Christ can bear as truly as any other human being, and a sorrow which, in fact, he did bear when in the garden he agonized, and when on the cross he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Then “his soul was made an offering for sin,” and in this his agony lay his strictly expiatory suffering. He then “bore our sins,” that is, the punishment which was due to them.

3. The third point here to be adverted to, relates to the mode in which the benefit of Christ’s substitution is to be enjoyed. In Scripture this is said to be by faith in him, or by believing in his name. Now this is closely analogous to what would take place in a case of judicial substitution. The efficacy of such a process, so far as the criminal is concerned, lies simply in his acceptance of it. There is obviously nothing for him to do, the substitution itself, tendered by another and accepted by the judge, providing for everything besides. As, on the one hand, he may frustrate the entire process intended for his benefit by refusing his consent to it, so, on the other, on giving his consent the whole takes effect. And thus to believe in Christ is, in other words, to accept his interposition, and to give our heart’s consent to the method of our release through him. It is elsewhere called “submitting to the righteousness of God,” or to God’s method of treating the ungodly as righteous. The benefit received is in one word called justification ; and it is justification by imputed righteousness. That is to say, as our sins were imputed, or reckoned, to Jesus Christ, in order that he might bear the penalty due to us for them, so, when we believe in him, his righteousness is imputed, or reckoned, to us, in order that we may be released from the consequences of our iniquity.

By attending to the three points now adverted to, we see

how fully the system of substitution is carried out in the work of redemption by Christ.

1. In application, I observe that it is of the first importance that our subject should be viewed in its relation to the character of God. On the ground of the necessary benevolence of the divine nature, objections have been strongly made, and tenaciously held, against the doctrine of expiatory sacrifice; but, according to the view we have now taken of it, all objections of this class fall of themselves. It is true, indeed, that God's requirement of an atoning sacrifice is inexorable, and that as, under the Hebrew law, without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins, so, in the work of redemption shadowed forth by it, without expiation there is no deliverance from the wrath to come. But is God therefore implacable? By no means. Placability is a matter of personal feeling, and God, as moral governor, is in a position in which personal feelings have no scope. As a magistrate the maintenance of law is to him a matter, not of choice, but of necessity, and, even in its most rigorous aspects, is perfectly compatible with his infinite benevolence. It is, indeed, marvellously blended with benevolence; since, at the same moment in which he inexorably requires a sacrifice, he brings forth from his bosom the sacrifice which he demands. He *gave* his Son to die for man. Strange love! and proof incontestable that the severe necessities of official duty have not extinguished the ardour of his compassion. Objections to the doctrine of expiation seem to root themselves in an unwillingness to admit the moral government of God, or the distinction between his personal and official character; but this position is at once too strong and too necessary to be abandoned. For myself, at least, so soon as I am driven from it, I will abandon also the doctrine of expiation.

Further, it is only from the point of view we have taken that the nature of our Lord's interposition can be truly seen. It has been highly extolled as an act of self-sacrifice to his Father, and its virtue as an element of redemption has been supposed to consist in this its excellency. Now, I admit that Christ's humiliation was an act, and an illustrious act, of self-sacrifice to his Father; but it was necessarily more than this. It became an act of self-sacrifice to his Father, only because his Father (so to speak) wanted some one to

effect redemption by humiliation and suffering. Without such an occasion no such act of self-sacrifice could have been performed. To suppose it to have been performed without an occasion of adequate grandeur, is to reduce it from an act of elevated virtue to a mere piece of either whimsical, or romantic, extravagance; amazing, indeed, but totally destitute of moral sublimity. If such an occasion really existed as a divine call for the expiation of human guilt, there was scope for the exercise on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ of devotedness to his Father without a parallel; and the transaction supplies elements of transcendent power in support of his intercession with God.

2. The practical uses of our subject are of the deepest interest.

Behold, O sinner! the foundation of your hope is laid in the blood and agony of Jesus the Lord. How sad and irretrievable must your condition have been, to have needed for its relief so vast a sacrifice! Was it only so that a righteous judge could release you from condemnation? And in such an extremity was there a friend found for you who would stoop so low? How lost, and yet how loved! How ruined, and yet rescue is placed within your reach! Will you despise—neglect it? Forbid it all thoughts of righteousness, all sense of your soul's preciousness, all solemnities of the world to come!

And, if indeed you desire salvation, remember in what method it is to be obtained. As it is under the condemnation of God's law that you lie, so only by the satisfaction of its curse can you be redeemed. It is this which the shedding of the blood of Christ has effected for you. Place your whole confidence there. Whatsoever things have been gain to you, count them all but loss that you may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

How firmly is laid the foundation of a believer's privilege! The plan of redemption goes, indeed, down to the lowest depth of his misery. Being clad in the robe of his Redeemer's righteousness, from his condition of guilt and condemnation he emerges into a state of security and honour. By faith in Jesus he is justified, that is, declared righteous, and henceforward he shall be treated as such. O happy change! and fit foundation for all that a God of grace may

be pleased, for the glory of his beloved Son, to adorn him with for ever.

3. Allow me a general remark in conclusion.

I have, for the clearer understanding of it, divided the great problem of God's administration towards man into two facts, corresponding with the two principal aspects of his character in relation to it; and we have seen separately in what manner the exercise of his grace is rendered harmonious with his righteousness on the one hand, and his holiness on the other. It will be proper, before we dismiss the subject, to place the two parts of it in their proper relation to each other, and to view them as a whole.

"The grace of God bringeth salvation." Its operation is twofold; by expiatory sacrifice and by mediatorial interposition, corresponding with God's official and personal character. Can the action of each be indicated and assigned; blended, and directed to one common object? In reply to this question two observations may be made.

First, all that is active in redemption belongs to the personal, or mediatorial, system. So, when the apostle says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians v. 19); here is a system of active means employed to bring sinners back to God. The aspect of redemption as an official, or expiatory, system, is the reverse of this. The magistrate is in such a matter passive. The criminal being before him, he administers the law, or sanctions and carries out the scheme proposed for its modification. In this view God simply "justifieth him that believeth in Jesus."

Secondly, all that is rich in blessing belongs to the personal, or mediatorial, system. The action of the magistrate is limited to the legal standing of the accused brought before him. He condemns or justifies, and nothing more. The superadded privileges of redemption are gifts of personal affection. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephes. i. 3, 4).

Or, to give our whole subject a practical form, we may say that, in coming to God, a sinner has to do with two things, his holiness and his righteousness; or his character personal

and official. First he meets with God in his official character. He is a criminal at the bar, and must seek deliverance from condemnation by submission to Christ, the approved substitute for the guilty who will accept his aid. He will thus, as a sinner believing in Jesus, be justified, or restored to his place of security and honour under the divine rule; nor can anything else be done for him in the way of mercy till this is effected. After this he will meet with God in his personal character. He has been at enmity with the Author of his being, and has to seek restoration to his friendship through the Mediator, whom God has appointed at once to facilitate and to regulate his access. Availing himself of this mediation, he will be made "accepted in the beloved," and introduced into all the privileges of the sons and heirs of God.

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity!"

LECTURE IV.

THE ASPECT OF REDEMPTION—ITS UNIVERSALITY.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
—*John* iii. 16.

WE have already surveyed the work of redemption in some of its most interesting and important features. We have ascertained its proximate cause, we have examined its procuring cause, and now we turn to a different view of it. We ask, Towards whom does it look, and for whose benefit is it intended? And, in doing so, we propose a question assuredly of the greatest practical moment.

On such a point, indeed, it might seem that there could scarcely be either uncertainty in fact, or division of opinion; yet the case is not so. The question has been raised among divines, whether redemption contemplates the whole world, or only a portion of it, and theological controversy is pervaded by the discussion of this knotty point. Not only

diverse, but extreme, views are entertained on it; some holding that redemption, in all its parts, is for all men; others that, in all its parts, it is only for selected men. At these remote points high Calvinists and Arminians arrange themselves, severally advocating General redemption and Particular redemption. Now, I am not going to rank myself with either of these parties. I think that each has some truth, and that the whole truth is held by them both; I shall, therefore, aim, under scriptural guidance, at taking a middle path. I shall endeavour to show that redemption is both general and particular; only not so general as is affirmed by the one party, nor so particular as is affirmed by the other.

In the present Lecture I shall treat of the universal aspect of redemption, or of the aspect which it bears to mankind at large. And in the following method:—I shall endeavour first to demonstrate the fact that, in some sense, redemption is for all men; and, secondly, to define the sense in which it is so.

I. I shall endeavour to demonstrate the fact that, in some sense, redemption is for all men. And towards this demonstration I adduce the following arguments.

First, there is a presumption in favour of it. There is so, inasmuch as there is nothing in the nature of the case adapted to suggest a restriction. There is nothing suggestive of limitation in either the theoretical or actual issues of the covenant of Eden; these were intended to be, and have practically been, universal. There is nothing suggestive of limitation in the moral condition of mankind; guilt and ruin are universal, there being none that doeth good, and sinneth not. There is nothing suggestive of limitation in the character of God; for he doeth good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Although entitled to act with sovereignty, and often manifestly doing so, this cannot in any case be anticipated, or known before he himself makes it manifest. Without going into evidence, therefore, the fair presumption is, that, for a case of equal and universal ruin, a God of universal benevolence, since he has provided a remedy, has provided a remedy, in some sense, of universal application.

Secondly, there are facts in favour of it. I mention three facts of this class.

On the view which I have given of the covenant of Eden, the existence of the race is due to redemption. According to the tenour of that covenant, its transgression was to be followed by the death on the same day of the transgressor, and under this regimen fallen Adam could have had no posterity. If the race exists, consequently, it is through the introduction of a new dispensation, which can be no other than the dispensation of mercy through Jesus Christ. To this extent, therefore, redemption has actually comprehended all men.

As a second fact of a similar bearing, I may mention the long-suffering of God towards transgressors of his moral law, which cannot be regarded as less than a portion of redemption itself. Sin deserves immediate punishment; and, if punishment is not immediately inflicted, it is not because God is "slack concerning his promise" or his threatening, but because in his mercy he gives space for repentance. Now mercy can be exercised towards sinners only through Christ, and mercy through Christ, whatever be the mode or extent of it, is assuredly a portion of redemption; which in this respect, therefore, is universal, for the long-suffering of God is extended to all.

A further fact of decisive import is the final resurrection of the body, a great event of the future in which the wicked as well as the righteous will participate. However different may be the respective issues, the resurrection in itself cannot be regarded as less than a victory over death. It is also an event necessarily preliminary to the last judgment, which itself is a part of Christianity. Redemption, therefore, must have comprehended all men; for, if it did not, why are all men to triumph over death, and to stand at the bar of Christ?

All these facts tend in one direction. They conspire to prove that the great work of redemption, which has thus actually come into contact with all men, must be in some sense universal.

Thirdly, there is a strong implication in favour of it.

Look, for example, at the practical address of the Gospel. It neither expresses nor implies any limitation. It is distinctly and unequivocally enjoined to be preached "to every creature," that is, of course, to every human being; and the issues are expressed in the most general terms: "He that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." The invitations given are of universal tenour, and absolutely without qualification. God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). On the supposition that redemption is for all, these and many similar passages, are intelligible and consistent; but what perplexity are they adapted to create if redemption be only for a part? It had surely, in such a case, been reasonable to affix to the invitations a restricted import, corresponding with the restricted extent of the benefit. Where is either the kindness, or the truthfulness, of inviting those for whom there is no provision?

Fourthly, there are express declarations in favour of it. It would seem difficult, indeed, for any language to be more explicit than the language of Scripture is on this point.

Begin with the words of the apostle (Titus ii. 11), "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;" meaning, of course, that "the grace of God bringeth salvation to all men." Twice is Christ called "the Saviour of the world;" once by the Samaritans, as expressing a popular expectation which he did not contradict (John iv. 42), and once by the apostle John (1 John iv. 14). Christ is said to take away "the sin of the world" (John i. 29), to have given himself "a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 6), and to be a propitiation "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2).

Redemption is declared to be coextensive with guilt and ruin. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 6). "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19). Redemption is directly opposed to condemnation: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 17).

I have briefly adverted to these passages, not for the sake of opening them individually, but of bringing their joint impression to bear upon you. It would surely be strange that the Bible should abound with such passages as these, if redemption had not in some sense to do with all men.

Or, if you like to examine one passage more closely, take that prominent one which I have chosen for my text. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The gloss ordinarily put upon this passage by high Calvinists is, that by "the world" is meant the elect world; an ingenious gloss, certainly, but without either authority or proof, and, therefore, without any claim to our regard. But it is, besides, suicidal; for the amount of divine love here shown, as explained in the latter part of the verse, is by no means such as God bestows upon his elect. The world of whom Christ here speaks God so loves as to give his only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" but how does he love the world of his chosen? Let the apostle tell us: "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. ii. 13). Now, nothing can be more unsatisfactory in biblical interpretation than to make a passage apply to parties to whom in fact it is not applicable. Indeed, were it so that God gave his Son for the elect only to the effect that whosoever of them believed should not perish, but have everlasting life, it might justly be observed that this implied a contingent portion of the elect who would not believe, and be asked what was to become of them. It is needless, however, to pursue further a gloss which is manifestly an evasion, and plainly resorted to under the unwelcome pressure of adverse evidence. I here close, therefore, the first part of my discourse, and, I venture to think, not without having effected the demonstration at which I have aimed. In some sense, assuredly, redemption is universal. Let us now proceed to the second thing proposed, and inquire in what sense it is so.

II. In entering on this part of our subject, I recall to your minds the intimation I have already given, that I am not of those who affirm that redemption appertains in one and the same sense to all men. There are, in my judgment, both too many restrictive phrases in the language of Scripture, and too many actual differences in human experience, to permit such an assertion to be satisfactorily made; but of this topic I shall have to speak so fully in a subsequent

Lecture, that I shall not here enlarge upon it. Occupying strictly my position, that in some sense redemption pertains to all men, I reply to the question—In what sense?—in the following manner.

In the first place, here is presented to us the great fact, that God gave his Son for all men; or, in more extended terms, he appointed his Son to the office of mediator, and, placed him in the position of substitute, for all men. I hold this to be distinctly asserted in the text; and in this its import the text is unequivocally sustained by other passages already quoted.

This, however, it may be said, is not the whole of redemption. No, it is not; our authority stops here, however, and, according to it, this is the whole of redemption as it belongs to all men. There is, undoubtedly, much more in this great work, but nothing more is said to pertain to "the world." The declaration is, that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son"—no more.

But, the Holy Spirit—is not this also given to all men? I know that some divines answer this question strongly in the affirmative, but I am not about to follow their example. I answer unhesitatingly, No. Of this also, however, I shall have to speak more fully hereafter, and I say so much at the present moment only to indicate to thoughtful hearers the whole breadth of my position.

But my affirmation that God gave his Son for all men, limited as it is, will not be granted without a struggle. It is by a large class of divines tenaciously contested, and this on several grounds, which it will be proper distinctly to notice.

The doctrine that God gave his Son for all men is said to be inconsistent with those passages of Scripture which speak of a limited atonement. Here is one of them—"I lay down my life for the sheep" (John x. 15). Here is another, in the words of the apostle—"Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). And there are doubtless others; but the citation of them would in nowise strengthen the argument, since, in a matter of divine testimony, one text is as conclusive as a thousand.

My answer to this is, that a meaning may surely be found for one class of scriptural passages without annulling another. It is a painful conclusion to come to respecting any valuable

writing, that it is contradictory of itself; and such a conclusion is not only painful, but impossible, in relation to a book which we believe to contain "the true sayings of God." The tendency to press one class of passages to an extreme signification, inconsistent with the natural and obvious meaning of others, so that the latter remain rather as difficulties, by some means, however rude, to be evaded, than as sources of instruction to be explored, is one of the great evils of theological controversy. It is, assuredly, our wisdom reverently to accept every inspired declaration, and to permit the sense of one to be limited by that of another, rather than to suffer the whole to run into a mass of inextricable confusion. It is a sad spectacle to see, on the field of theological controversy, one body of Christ's army waving triumphantly as its banner the sentence—"Christ laid down his life for the sheep;" and another equally jubilant with the motto, "He gave himself a ransom for all;" until, almost oblivious of their substantial agreement, they direct against each other a large part of that hostility which is due exclusively to their common foe.

To a high Calvinist, on the subject now before us, I should say, "I admit that Christ laid down his life for the sheep; but you also must admit that he gave himself a ransom for all; and our joint business is, not by one of these passages to disprove the other, but to assign a just and satisfactory meaning to both." Doubtless, Christ died both for the church and for the world—for the world in one sense, and for the church in another; and both these senses are with sufficient plainness indicated to us in the Bible. Here are the ends to be respectively answered: God gave his Son for the world, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" Christ gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it, . . . and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The difference lies, therefore, not in the substance of the gift, but in the design with which it was bestowed, and the benefits which were to accrue from it.

Again, the doctrine that God gave his Son for all men is said to be inconsistent with divine sovereignty, and God's purpose of election. Now, in answer to this objection, I freely admit the actual exercise of divine sovereignty in

redemption, and the infinite glory attaching to it. I admit, also, that, on the ground I occupy, the exercise of divine sovereignty is excluded from the one fact of redemption which consists in God's gift of his Son for the conditional benefit of the world. This I affirm to be for all men, without any discrimination of one from another. But, surely, there is sufficient scope for electing grace without making *everything* to be determined by it. It is enough to say that, in redemption, divine sovereignty has an important province, and that in its province it will be maintained and glorified. There are both the special design with which Christ gave himself for one portion of mankind (the church), and the gift and dispensation of the Holy Spirit by which this design is carried out and consummated, combining to constitute a grand sphere of operation in which discriminating grace is all in all. Within this sphere I own the absolute dominion, and triumphant glory, of divine sovereignty; and, owning this, is any dishonour done to it, or any scriptural injustice, by maintaining that God's gift of his Son for the conditional salvation of mankind is an act of universal benevolence?

Thirdly, the doctrine that God gave his Son for all men is said to be inconsistent with the perdition of any. The argument is this: If Christ died for all, all will surely be saved; for how can any perish for whom Christ died? This argument is both short and plain, and it would be conclusive, if there were but one sense in which Christ died for men; but, there being two, its bearing entirely fails. If it could be proved that Christ did not die for men in any sense but to secure their salvation, then, of course, it could not be maintained that he died for all men, since the painful fact is beyond contradiction that all men are not saved. But, recollecting that one object for which Christ died was to establish a ground of conditional hope—"that whosoever believeth in him should not perish"—there is clearly no difficulty in conceiving this to be universal. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned," is the law of a system which evidently presupposes the possibility both of unbelief and perdition. In this view of the case, there is no inconsistency in saying that those may perish for whom Christ died.

I conclude this reply to objections by restating my position, that God gave his Son for all men. It is now incumbent on

us to examine more particularly that all-important position of mankind of which this fact is the basis. What are its nature, character, and value?

The great fact of God's gift of his Son for the world places the whole race of men on a ground of conditional hope. To every man salvation is now possible, for God has done all that was needful to render it so. No sinner is any longer shut up to condemnation, but may lay hold on eternal life. This hope, however, is strictly a conditional hope. A sinner will be saved if he believes in Jesus, not otherwise; "he that believeth not shall be condemned."

In endeavouring to estimate the value of such a method, it may, no doubt, be observed that it secures no ultimate benefit; and it may be asked, Where is the advantage of a system, which, after all its promise, may do us no good; which may and will be refused; and which, by our refusal of it, may even aggravate our peril? To this it may justly be replied, that opportunity is an element which enters largely into the benign and inviting aspects of human life. No one thinks lightly of his privilege, if he is so placed as to have an opportunity of becoming happy, or of becoming rich; the opportunity constitutes an appropriate appeal to his active powers, the use of which is at once the fulfilment of a recognized obligation, and a source of no inconsiderable pleasure. And, if this be so with respect to earthly benefits, must it not be more emphatically so with respect to heavenly ones? Can he who admits it to be a felicity to have an opportunity of obtaining wealth or honour, affirm that it is less to have an opportunity of obtaining treasure in heaven, and a crown of immortal glory? The opportunity may be lost, it is true, and its loss may recoil bitterly on the careless one who neglected to profit by it; but so it may be with respect to earthly good, and no one is entitled to represent the opportunity of salvation as naught, unless he will at least equally depreciate his opportunities of secular advancement.

To go a little more particularly into this subject, however, I may observe, that here are exhibited over again, and for the third time, the features of a probationary system. We had them first under the covenant of Eden, then under the administration of the moral law, and we have them now under the dispensation of mercy. Our first parents were tried in paradise, whether they would keep the command-

ment of the Lord or no; by the moral law mankind have been put to the trial, whether they would glorify the Lord their God; and now, by the conditional provision of salvation, mankind are tried again, whether they will be reconciled to God. Now every system of probation has its use, irrespectively of the manner in which its subjects may treat it; whether they obey it or resist it, it equally tries them, which was its object. So the dispensation of mercy, whatever else be its result, brings out what is in man's heart towards God, and produces in any event a preparation for the judgment to come.

Human probation as thus conducted, however, is probation under new circumstances. In Eden we had the probation of one who stood as the representative of many; by the moral law the system was applied to the individual, by a probation of every man in his own person; but under both of these the issue was determined by a single offence. Under the dispensation of mercy there is instituted a probation which affords an opportunity of repentance, and provides for the remission of sin; nor is it merely one sin which may be forgiven, or one opportunity of repentance which is granted, but, through the long-suffering of God, opportunities of repentance are repeated, and multiplied transgressions may be put away. To this it may be added, that, under this last form of the probationary system, the heart of man is treated by new and more forcible appeals. Under two forms obligation and duty have been presented with all their force; here speaks Love, and in tones so powerful and tender, that, if man's heart will yield to anything, it will be vanquished now. Beyond this God has no more to say to man, and no more to extract out of him. The whole power of the probationary system is exhausted.

The subject we have been handling suggests several interesting topics, which may be noticed in conclusion.

1. We have a noble view of God's love to the world. We approach a point from which we may begin to estimate "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." Little as they deserved it, he pitied a rebellious race, and "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." Who shall estimate the grace? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). Broad and deep as

our ruin was, so deep and broad was his compassion; and there is not an individual of our race who may not, who should not, join in the grateful exclamation, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift"! (2 Cor. ix. 15.)

2. A testimony is here given to the value which God sets on the probationary system as an instrument of moral administration. It had doubtless an excellency in his view or he would not have employed it, either in the garden of Eden, for the diffusion of benefits through a whole race, or under the moral law, for the individual attainment of happiness; but, as thus for the third time employed, it is employed under far more interesting circumstances, and at a far greater cost. It might have seemed that the grace which led the divine Being to interpose on behalf of a guilty and ruined world, would naturally have led him to save; yet we find him arrested, as it were, in the gratification of such an impulse, and stopping short at the point of providing an opportunity of salvation which the sinner may either embrace or refuse. What a high value must, in his eyes, attach to a system for the sake of which he thus modifies the action of his mercy, and for the establishment of which he does not think it too much to expend even the blood of his Son!

3. A substantial basis is here laid for a universal ministry of the Gospel. Some preachers, holding the doctrine that Christ did not die for all men, have been consistent enough to refuse to preach the Gospel to all; either silently passing over the universal invitations, or limiting them to the modified version, "Come, elect sinner!" Others have freely employed the broadest language of Scripture, under the idea that God, who knows his own, will make the particular application of the general call. I must confess that I could not preach the Gospel to all on such a ground. To my mind, the only satisfactory ground for proclaiming salvation to all is that salvation is provided for all. With this understanding universal invitations are no juggle. They imply a fact which is really a fact. There is hope for all, for every one, and a warrant for every one to embrace it. We may say, with perfect and unquestionable truth, to every sinner, "God gave his Son *for you*, and, if you believe in him, you shall have everlasting life."

4. A practical appeal to the heart of man is prepared, of most touching power.

Sinner, ruined and undone! there is hope for you! Hope! Though you have provoked divine vengeance, and have heard its premonitory thunders, you need not perish, you may be saved. "Love's atoning work is done," and the gate of heaven is set open to your steps. There is hope for you! For you, the unworthy and the vile, the helpless and the lost. O flee from the wrath to come! O despise not the refuge that is set before you! Behold him who, in unparalleled compassion, died to save you, and whose arms are still extended, inviting your return.

Rebel, hard-hearted and stubborn! What can you mean by this obduracy? See how God has loved you; and will you not be reconciled? Wooed by the agonies of his beloved Son, will you still refuse his grace? You are not insensible to earthly love; why, then, to the heavenly, which so infinitely transcends all besides? What infatuation must that love of sin be, which, in the face of such entreaties, leads you on to destruction and despair!

LECTURE V.

THE ASPECT OF REDEMPTION—ITS PARTICULARITY.

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."—*2 Thessalonians* ii. 13.

I STATED in my last Lecture that widely different opinions have been held in relation to the aspect of redemption; it being maintained by one class of divines to belong in its entirety to the whole world of mankind, and by another to be absolutely restricted to a definite portion of them. I also avowed my purpose to take, under the guidance of Holy Scripture, a middle path between these two extremes, taking hold, as I hope, of the truth, and avoiding the errors, of both. I then proceeded to consider the aspect of redemption in so far as it is universal, and laid it down that God has given his Son for the world, with the intent, and to the

effect, of placing mankind without exception in a position of conditional hope. I now advance to consider the aspect of redemption in so far as it is not universal, but particular.

I. As to proof that redemption has a particular as well as a universal aspect, my course will be very simple. I shall take merely the ground of obvious and palpable fact.

If we look abroad in the world, the results of the work of redemption are by no means uniform. Some, it is true, believe and are saved, but, assuredly, not all men. Many (too many, alas!) both live and die in various forms of unbelief. As a statement of fact this admits of no question, and, without enlargement on it, I advance at once to the inquiry, How is it to be accounted for? It undoubtedly has a cause, and this cause must lie in one of two quarters; either it is in man, or it is in God. Is it in man? The cause of unbelief may be so, and let us with humility make the just acknowledgment that it is so; but is the cause of faith likewise in man? Is it of man himself to turn to God, and submit himself to his righteousness? If so, then verily hath the believer whereof to glory, and, in so far at least, he may take to himself the honour of his salvation. If there be any who maintain this, I will admit that they may feel no necessity of acknowledging any special interposition of divine mercy; but for myself I dare not make this claim, nor do I think that the Scripture allows it on the part of any one. "By grace are ye saved," says the apostle, "through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephes. ii. 8). The general doctrine of Scripture is, that man is so far estranged from God his Maker that it is not in his rebellious heart to accept the call of mercy; he dislikes and repels it, until another and a higher power subdues him, and brings into captivity those high thoughts which exalted themselves so resolutely against the acknowledgment of Christ. If then, as believers in Jesus, we differ from others, it is God who has made us to differ, and in this respect we have nothing that we have not received. On this proof of an actual particularity in redemption I absolutely rest.

II. Since something in redemption is particular, can we now answer the question, What is it?

I. To begin with that which is obvious and palpable, this, at least, in redemption, is particular, namely, the divine influence by which the heart is subdued to the reception of

the Gospel. This evidently is not given to mankind in the mass, but is distributed to individuals. But what is this influence? It is the influence of the Holy Spirit, to whom we know a grand and glorious part in redemption is assigned; and it is, consequently, in relation to his work and mission that redemption has an aspect of particularity.

The ground which I thus take is strongly contested. Those who affirm with me that Christ died for all men, for the most part affirm also that the Spirit is given to all men; and I shall have as sharp a conflict to maintain that the Spirit is a limited gift, as I had in my last Lecture to maintain that Christ was a universal one; only now I contend with other parties.

There are two modes in which this subject is treated: it is made, on the one hand, a topic of general reasoning, and, on the other, of scriptural reference. I propose to say a few words on each of these.

(1). In the way of general reasoning, it is said that man is not able of himself to repent and turn to God; and that, consequently, it must be a part of any fair and equitable method of salvation to give him, not only a Saviour, but strength to lay hold on him.

In replying to this argument, some divines admit the premises and resist the conclusion; affirming that God may justly require faith and repentance from men, although they cannot perform them. I am not called upon now to refute this view; I only say that it is embarrassed by too many difficulties for me to adopt it. I cannot conceive of God as so hard a master, or so unrighteous a judge. The flaw which I find in the argument for the universal distribution of the Spirit lies, not in the conclusion, but in the premises. If it were true that men are unable to repent, I would admit that God, in calling upon them to repent, is under an equitable obligation to give them the Spirit: I believe the premises, however, to be untrue, and therefore I deny the conclusion.

Do I then affirm that man is able of himself to repent and turn to God? I do; and, not only rash, but heretical, as it may seem, I make this avowal in the most explicit manner, because I shrink from the slightest appearance of disguise. And the grounds on which I affirm this I will, in a few words, submit to you.

I infer this directly from the nature of man as a rational

being, endowed with a capacity of self-government. Such a capacity we know both ourselves and others to possess, and without it, indeed, the position of mankind in this world would be both cruel and absurd. Now repentance and turning to God are strictly acts of self-government, and, consequently, competent to man.

I am aware that this inference from the nature of man may be met by an appeal to the words of Scripture. Does not our Lord say, it may be asked, "No man *can* come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him"? Is it not enough to reply to this question by asking another—Does not our Lord say, "*Ye will not* come unto me that ye might have life"? Undoubtedly, both these declarations issued from his lips (see John vi. 44 and v. 40); and, undoubtedly, they are both of equal truth and equal authority, so that neither must be put out of sight. How then are they to be understood? Plainly, not both of them in the letter, for in the letter they are contradictory one of the other; one of them, consequently, must be understood, if not directly as a figure of speech, yet as involving a metaphorical element as the basis of its use. To discover which of the two terms must be thus modified is not difficult. When, on the one hand, our Lord says of the Jews, "*Ye will not* come unto me," he uses language of strictly literal import, in which no metaphorical element can be detected; but when, on the other hand, he says, "No man *can* come unto me," he employs a phrase which, although capable of a literal meaning, and often used in it, is capable also of a figurative meaning, a mode in which likewise it is often employed. In common life a man often says "I cannot," when he means that he cannot; but, also, he often says "I cannot" when he does not mean that he cannot, but only that he will not, or even that he would rather not. Instances of this will too readily occur to you to make it needful for me to adduce them here. In the phrase *cannot* there does lurk a metaphorical element, in virtue of which it comes to be popularly used in two senses, and it is always fair, and often necessary, to inquire in which.

The answer to such an inquiry will be found for the most part, if not always, easy. If, on the one hand, the case be one which includes a physical impossibility, this will generally be apparent, or, at least, discoverable; and if, on

the other hand, the case be one in which no physical impediment exists, but in which the phrase "cannot" is used to express, or to cover, reluctance or aversion, this also should be tolerably manifest. In the case actually before us the matter is perfectly plain. Pride, prejudice, and carnality, hindered the Jews from coming to Jesus; the fact, therefore, literally expressed, was, not that they could not come, but that they would not. This is in strict accordance with our Lord's literal declaration, "*Ye will not come unto me;*" and, of course, when the same fact is set forth under the different phrase, "*No man can come unto me,*" it is necessary to understand this in its metaphorical sense, and as meaning no man *will* come. And the same mode of treatment is applicable and requisite in all other cases of similar phraseology.

If we test this solution of the difficulty by an appeal to our own consciousness, we shall find its justice fully sustained. Why is it really, according to the testimony of our consciences, that any of us do not repent and turn to God? Is it not that we love sin, and cleave to the world; that we prefer the indulgence of our appetites and passions to the lofty aims and purer restraints of religion? All which is surely not to be translated into the short phrase *we cannot*, except in the metaphorical sense in which it means *we will not*.

It may be further asked, however, whether, admitting the justice of our inference from the nature of man in his original purity, the same inference can safely be drawn in his fallen condition. Has he not lost his power by the fall?

Undoubtedly, man has, by the fall, suffered a grievous loss of some kind; but it is clearly necessary to ascertain with care of what kind it is. He has obviously not lost *everything* that made him what at first he was.

The question now specifically before us is, whether man has by the fall lost his power of self-government? And to this question I conceive there can be but one answer, Assuredly not; for in point of fact he possesses it still, as his action under the various circumstances of life fully demonstrates. If he had, indeed, he would have been no longer sane, and the whole race should have been compassionately deposited in lunatic asylums.

By such a conception, indeed, the proper effect of the fall

upon our nature is totally misunderstood. It is not on the mechanism of our rational powers, but on the state of the affections, that the blow of Adam's transgression has fallen. Human nature is now, not incapable of self-government, but averse to God, and prone to sin; it is afflicted, not with an incapacity for holiness, but with a disinclination to it. The whole state of the fact, therefore, is expressed, when, concerning even fallen man, it is said, that he *will not* come to Christ.

But still *he will not*, I seem to hear it retorted; and that is the same thing. Let me be excused for meeting this retort with a direct contradiction. It is by no means the same thing, but very far from it. Indeed, this change in the terms altogether alters the nature of the argument. Hitherto it has been put thus—Man *cannot* repent, therefore help should be given him; now it stands as follows—Man *will not* repent, therefore help should be given him. Let me ask whether any one is disposed to press the argument in this form? If you have directed your servant to do something, and he can but will not, do you say, therefore I ought to help him? “I trow not.”

The general reasoning adduced in support of the view that the Spirit should be given to all is thus plainly untenable. The argument is this—Men being unable to repent, the Spirit should be universally given; but, the premises being false, the conclusion entirely fails. It will further tend to show the fallacy of the argument, however, if I adduce some of the objections to which such a view is liable.

On the supposition stated, the gift of the Spirit would be a matter of equity, not of grace. It is pleaded for on the very ground that it is a matter of equity to find strength where you require action. Salvation, however, is a matter, not of equity, but of grace; and it can hardly be consistent with the reverence due to the great scheme of redemption, to graft upon it an appendage so irreconcilably at variance with it. Here “grace reigns,” and whatever is not subject to its dominion, and conducive to its glory, can find no place.

On the supposition stated, the influence of the Spirit would be as much required to enable us to keep the law, as to obey the Gospel. If our want of ability is the ground on which the distribution of the Spirit rests, it should clearly be given to us in every case to which our want of ability

extends. Now, under the pressure of the fall, we are quite as unable to keep the law as we are to obey the Gospel; and the help of the Spirit should be given, therefore, for the first as well as the second. Yet, if this be so, the dispensation of the Spirit cannot belong to the scheme of redemption exclusively, but should belong also to God's general moral administration, and be granted to every man for the fulfilment of his moral duty. We hear nothing in Scripture, however, of any such appendage to God's moral government; on the contrary, the dispensation of the Spirit is exhibited as a strict and glorious peculiarity of the work of mercy, and, consequently, it cannot really repose on a basis which would necessarily extend it to a different and a dissimilar system.

On the supposition stated, we should be entitled to look for characteristic effects. It would be nothing less than absurd to suppose that a universal distribution of the Spirit should be without some worthy and adequate results; yet no such results appear. Supposing such a distribution, what has the world at large been the better for it? or what is the world at large the better for it now? What gross darkness and deep depravity have covered the nations, and overflowed the earth like a deluge! How comparatively inefficient have been the means of instruction, and the processes of appeal, to which the heart and conscience of man in every age should have responded! Instead of the hearing ear and the understanding heart, how dominant has been the influence of prejudice and carnality, of pride and self-will! And all this under the universal dispensation of the Spirit! Could the world have been worse if it had been abandoned to its own corruption? That partial effects of a different kind have been produced is true, but these prove nothing as to a universal gift.

On the supposition stated, it still remains to account for the differences in human conduct. Whether the Spirit be given alike to all men or not, it is certain that all men do not act alike. Even among those who are placed in similar circumstances of external privilege, some act a very different part from others. One is earnestly thoughtful and deeply serious, broken-hearted and penitent, submissive to God's mercy, loving, and devoted; another is thoughtless and worldly, fascinated by pleasure, or overwhelmed by business. Whence is this difference? If it be admitted that God has

given his Spirit to one and not to the other, the case is at once plain, and the effects tally perfectly with the causes in operation; but, if both have been treated alike, why have they acquitted themselves so differently? Both are corrupt and depraved creatures; why have they not both been inattentive and rebellious? Is the willing and obedient to take the credit of this to himself, as being better disposed than his neighbour? Or is he to fall in the dust with mingled shame and gratitude, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake"?

On the supposition stated, the influence of the Holy Spirit is erroneously conceived of. We are not able, it is said, to repent and turn to God, and the Spirit is supposed to be given to supply this want of power. Now power is in all cases a physical property, whether we regard it as resulting from the construction of the body, or from the faculties of the mind. We sometimes, indeed, speak of moral power, but this is only a figurative expression, applied to certain states of feeling; power, strictly understood, is a physical property, whether of body or of mind. And, if we conceive of the gift of the Spirit as conferring power, we do, whether we are aware of it or not, conceive of it as a physical influence, and so reduce it far below its real glory and excellence. Assuredly, the influence of the Spirit of God is not of a physical, but of a moral nature; an influence holy, like himself, which physical influences are not; and an influence, consequently, directly affecting, not our capacity, but our affections. To give us a new faculty would but raise us in the scale of physical being; to give us a new heart—that is, to alter our prevalent affections—is to raise us in the scale of moral being.

On the supposition stated, the influence of the Holy Spirit would be of no use. Its object, we are told, is to give men more strength. Now every man employs his strength, be it less or more, according to his disposition; a good man will do well with it, and an evil man will do evil. If you give a wicked man more strength, therefore, he will only be more wicked. Or, for illustration, imagine a criminal trying to escape from an officer of justice in pursuit; if you give him more strength what will he do with it? Why, to use a familiar phrase, he will only run the faster. So it is with sinners towards God.

They are departing from God, and giving them more strength does not in any degree improve their condition. What they want is better feeling, and a disposition to employ aright the strength they have; in a word, a heart to return.

(2). I have thus said enough, perhaps, in relation to the general reasoning by which it is attempted to sustain the doctrine that the Spirit is given to every man; let us now notice the passages of Scripture currently adduced in support of it.

The earliest of these is found in Genesis vi. 3: "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Without staying to remark here how plausibly, but how unsatisfactorily, the workings of man's natural conscience are taken for the strivings of the Spirit of God, it is sufficient to observe that the passage evidently relates to the inspired ministry of Noah, by which, for a hundred years before the flood, it pleased God to warn and admonish—or, in the emphatic, but not exaggerated, phrase of the same writer, to "strive with"—the profligate generation of men then afflicting the earth. To the direct influence of the Spirit of God on mankind the text has no reference whatever.

Another of the passages currently adduced on this question is in Acts vii. 51, where Stephen, addressing the Jewish Sanhedrim, exclaims, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." All that it is needful to say respecting this passage is, that, like the preceding, it relates, not to the direct influence of the Spirit, but to an inspired ministry. That this is so becomes plain when we read what immediately follows: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" It thus appears that the ancient Jews resisted the Holy Ghost in persecuting the prophets by whom he spake to them, and not by resisting any direct influence exerted upon their minds.

A third passage to which it is proper to advert occurs in 1 Corinthians xii. 7: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." It is obvious, on looking at the connexion in which this passage is placed, that the apostle is treating of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, by which the earliest age of the church was so largely distinguished. And, in the particular verse before us, he is

not so much asserting that these gifts were conferred upon "every man"—that is, upon every member of the church at Corinth—as that, to every man to whom they were given, they were given for a purpose of practical utility. So he continues: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [that is, to profit others, not himself]: for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;" and so on, through a passage in which the apostle powerfully rebukes the tendency to ostentation and display to which these splendid endowments had been a provocation. It is clearly unwarrantable to found a doctrine of the universal gift of the Spirit on such a passage as this.

The last Scripture I shall notice is found in John xvi. 8, where our Lord, speaking of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, says: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." There is no doubt that the action of the Spirit here indicated relates to "the world," that is, to the whole multitude of those to whom the Gospel should be preached; but it is plainly an action to be carried on by external means, and not by a direct influence. This the passage read in its extent clearly shows: "And when he is come, he will reprove [convince] the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The amount of the statement is, that the extraordinary and supernatural facts by which the early preaching of the Gospel would be accompanied should exhibit convincing evidence, to all who should be made acquainted with them, of the divine glory and mission of Jesus.

I may now observe generally, that the passages of Scripture adduced to support the doctrine of the universal gift of the Spirit are as insufficient for the purpose as the general reasoning.

Before quitting this topic, I may notice a modified view of the doctrine now in question which is held by some divines. It is this, that the gift of the Spirit, although not universal, generally accompanies the preaching of the Gospel, to which

it is conceived to be a kind of suitable appendage. Respecting this view, it is enough to observe that it is evidently resorted to under the pressure of argumentative difficulty, and therefore much to be suspected. It is, also, without any support from Scripture, while the facts which are supposed to be in agreement with it are naturally resolvable into the operations of man's heart and conscience, under the light and power of Gospel truth. And, while thus destitute of support of any kind, this timid and diluted doctrine is open to all the objections and difficulties which attend its bolder and more robust associate.

I now bring this argument to a close; and, having shown that there is no force in the methods by which the doctrine of a universal distribution of the Spirit has been sustained, I fall back on the statement with which I set out, namely, that the Spirit is given, not to all men, but to some, the work of redemption having clearly, in this respect, an aspect of particularity.

2. Having thus begun with what is most palpable and obvious, we have to take a step into what is more secret and remote. I now observe, that this particularity in the mission of the Holy Ghost carries with it the conception of a corresponding particularity in the work of Christ. The reason of the case demonstrates this. For, the distribution of the Spirit being a part of the dispensation of mercy, and this being wholly founded on the work of Christ, it follows, both that every part of the superstructure must have its bearing on the foundation, and that every part of the foundation must have its correspondence with the superstructure. As Christ died for all men, so the Gospel is to be preached to all; and as the Spirit is given to some only, so for some only, in some sense, must Christ have died.

And the scriptural intimations on this subject are sufficiently clear. It is here that we find the place and bearing of those passages of Holy Writ which I referred to in my last Lecture, and which speak so plainly of a redeeming work unequivocally restricted: as John x. 25, "I lay down my life for the sheep;" and Ephes. v. 25, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." I should be ashamed of myself if I had any wish to evade, or to diminish, the force of this language. Undoubtedly, Christ did in a peculiar sense lay down his life for the sheep, and give himself for

the church; not herein interfering with that which he did for the world in dying for them; but adding to it a further exercise of mercy, in securing, through the influence of the Spirit, his people's final salvation. There is thus an aspect of particularity, not only in the mission of the Spirit, but in the work of Christ on which it is founded.

3. We cannot, however, stop here. I must observe, thirdly, that the particularity thus observable in the mission of the Holy Spirit, and in the work of Christ, must be traced farther back, namely, to the purpose of God. This is required on the general principle, that all which God does he does according to his purpose; and redemption, which is the most costly and glorious of his works, is assuredly not an exception to the rule. Nor have we in this matter any preferable alternative. We have before us the fact that he has given his Son in a peculiar sense for a portion of mankind, with a view to send his Spirit into their hearts; now, he has done this either with a purpose, or without one, either as a matter of deep wisdom and eternal counsel, or as an accident, or possibly an error. Can we hesitate a moment which to choose? Is it not immeasurably better that so grave and important a step should have its place among the everlasting counsels of infinite wisdom, and the actual proceeding emerge from those unfathomable depths into the light of day clothed in divine beauty, and working out a purpose of divine benignity?

And the language of Scripture on this matter is decisive and unequivocal. Hear, for example, the apostle of the Gentiles: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians i. 3-5).

Or let consideration be given to the words which have served as the text of our discourse: "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

Here, then, we have what is commonly spoken of as the doctrine of election distinctly stated, and undeniably established; the doctrine, namely, that God from everlasting elected some of our race to eternal life, by an exercise of discriminating and sovereign grace. But, since this doctrine cannot be blotted out from the letter of Scripture, two modifications of it have been proposed by divines to whom it would seem to be unwelcome in its fulness.

We are taught on the one hand, that God has chosen to salvation those who, as he foresaw, would believe in Jesus; and on the other, that God has elected persons to a state of external privilege, but nothing more. Permit a passing remark on each of these representations.

One objection is common, and in my judgment fatal, to both these conceptions; namely, that they allow to man the glory of his own salvation. Whether chosen to external privileges merely, or chosen to salvation because he is foreseen to believe in Jesus, his faith is of himself, and not "the gift of God." We cannot accept a sentiment which thus feeds the pride of man, and robs God of his glory.

To speak of each of these views apart, however. Doubtless, those who enjoy religious advantages are elected to them; that is to say, our external condition is in this, as in many other respects, the result of a divine purpose; but that such an election does not satisfy the exigency of the case must be evident from a consideration of the language of Scripture. It is expressly declared that the elect are "chosen," not to outward privileges, but "to salvation."

Yes, it may be replied by men of another school, they are "chosen to salvation through faith," and all that God has in sovereignty determined is the general connexion between faith and salvation, leaving the individual to determine his own position. Yet, if God waited for human faith, and chose to salvation only those who he foresaw would believe, would any one become the object of such an aspect of grace? Would such a spectacle as a repenting sinner ever be presented to his omniscient foresight? If any one believes this, we commend him to the great Teacher. "No man," said Jesus, "can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him" (John vi. 44).

In this manner, then, I complete my answer to the question, what in the aspect of redemption is particular? There

is an eternal, personal, sovereign election on the part of God of certain individuals of mankind, for whom Christ died in such special manner as to secure, by the dispensation of the Spirit, their final salvation.

III. Let us now attend to some of the interesting and important questions which arise in relation to this grand aspect of redemption.

1. Is the particular aspect of redemption primary, or secondary?

Some divines hold it to be primary; that is, they maintain that the salvation of his elect was God's direct and immediate purpose in redemption. For myself, on the contrary, I hold it to be secondary; that is, I conceive of the universal aspect of redemption as in its nature antecedent to the particular, and of the particular as both added to it, and founded upon it. There is, indeed, no other way of arriving at a satisfactory conception of a universal aspect of redemption at all. It is much easier to imagine the particular grafted on the universal, than the universal grafted on the particular.

2. For what reason has the universal aspect of redemption been supplemented by the particular?

Was it not enough that redemption had been wrought for all, and placed within easy reach of all? Alas! no. For, in the wilfulness and depravity of their hearts, all would have rejected it, and so none have come to its actual enjoyment. Hence the occasion for a supplementary scheme of mercy presented to the all-piercing foresight and compassionate heart of the universal Father. Would his rebellious children have returned to him at his call, his discriminating grace and electing love had never been heard of; it is by the foreseen universal repulse that the occasion for their exercise has been supplied.

3. Wherein is the excellency of this supplementary interposition?

In this, that it would have been a thing unacceptable to God to have wrought, at so great a cost, a work of redemption which should have been absolutely unproductive of human happiness. Even on this supposition, indeed, it might have been largely promotive of his own glory, and he might with unsullied justice have left the whole race to perish in its unbelief; this, however, would not have been

pleasing to him. He chose rather—and the choice is divinely lovely in our eyes—that some should be made happy, and hence the supplementary action of his mercy. The election of grace is thus the ground of hope for the redeemed; and it is the only ground of hope that any of our race will actually attain the blessedness of redemption.

4. Why, then, was not the same kindness shown to all?

To this question I reply in several forms. In the first instance I say that we are now within a region of pure grace, and that in such a region we have no right to ask the question why. Here God is under no obligation, but is entitled to act with an absolute sovereignty, and it becomes us reverently to acknowledge it. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,” should be enough for us, as it was for one far greater than ourselves.

Is it not, however, unjust thus to do for one what is not done for another? No, it is not. There can, indeed, be no injustice in a case in which ample mercy is shown to all. It is an instance merely of degrees of kindness—more to some and less to others, but kindness to all. For all God gave his Son, that they might not perish. Infinite grace! To some God sends his Spirit to subdue their hearts. Far richer grace; but in no way contradicting, or annulling, that which is shown to all, or rendering the dealings of God unjust.

A reason may reverently be assigned, however, why the kindness which God has shown to some could not wisely have been shown to all. God, as universal ruler, acts under a moral system which he has seen it good to establish, and which it is of the first importance for him to maintain in honour. Let us ask ourselves, however, what would have been the aspect of this system, if the universal rejection of his redeeming mercy had been remedied by the universal gift of the Holy Spirit? Might it not in this case have been said, that the system of moral government was one which even its author was afraid to trust, and one so wanting in a principle of genuine equity that God could not allow it fully to work out its own issues? To such a slur as this the Most High could not subject his own operations, and he leaves, consequently, a portion of mankind under a system of equitable administration, of which the universe must know that he has no cause to be ashamed.

5. Is not God, then, in the exercise of his discriminating grace, acting arbitrarily, and without a reason?

He is acting with sovereignty, but not arbitrarily. Even in his election of grace he has not acted without a reason, which it were unworthy of his wisdom in any instance to do; the case simply is, that the reasons for which he acts are drawn from himself, and not from the creature. And, derived from such a source, the reasons from which he acts are far greater and more worthy of God than they could be if they were derived in any way from ourselves. His nature is at an infinite distance from caprice. It is as profound in wisdom, as it is lofty in supremacy; and, if ever the reasons of his electing love shall be disclosed, we shall doubtless find them to be pre-eminently conducive to his glory.

6. What effect does the particular aspect of redemption produce on the universal?

None whatever. The universal aspect of redemption suffers neither damage, nor restriction. Notwithstanding the supplementary scheme which it has pleased God to add, it still exists, and is in full operation. I know it has been held by some divines that election goes hand in hand with reprobation, and that God's choice of some entails repudiation of the rest. I need not say that I regard such a doctrine as utterly without foundation in truth; but I will here say a few words to show you how absolutely clear from it is the view of election which I have presented to you.

The doctrine of reprobation is rooted in the conception that God's sole object in redemption is the actual salvation of its objects. Hence, as not all men are actually saved, the work of redemption is absolutely limited to a part of mankind, which part are, of course, chosen by God; and the choice of these is, of necessity, under such circumstances, equivalent to the reprobation, or abandonment to eternal perdition without remedy or hope, of all the rest.

Now, I do not complain of this conclusion, if the premises be granted; but, as you well know, I utterly deny the premises, and conceive of the work of redemption after a widely different manner. I regard it as God's first object in redemption to place mankind in a state of conditional, or probationary, hope, which in point of fact he does, and has done, before in the order of events any occasion arises for his interposition actually to save. For such an interposition human perverseness subsequently supplies an occasion, and then comes the election of grace. As for reprobation, how-

ever, it is now plainly too late to think of it, since the provision of mercy for mankind has already been effected, and cannot be made void. To abolish it, indeed, were to subvert the very foundation on which the election of grace so majestically reposes.

I hold myself, therefore, and the views I advocate, entirely free from implication with the doctrine of reprobation.

Peculiarly favoured as the elect undoubtedly are, the non-elect are favoured also, and favoured in a degree which, were it not for the richer grace conferred on the elect, would excite our astonishment and praise to the utmost. Still is the declaration strictly and simply true, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

A few practical remarks shall now close our extended argument.

First. Learn to view with reverent adoration, and grateful acquiescence, the exercise of sovereign grace. It is of no use to quarrel with it. The facts are before us, and cannot be made other than they are, whatever may be our discontent; while the day is at hand which will reveal many secrets, and clear up many mysteries. Let an assurance of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God afford us composure in the development of his plans, while the ample supply of his bounty meets all our own necessities. Come, sinner; come! Cease to find fault with bounty shown to another. Contemplate rather the bounty shown to yourself. All that you need is here. Take what you want, for you are welcome to it, and complain not of other ministrations of the Master of the feast.

Secondly. Thankfully trace to its source every spiritual gift. Do not be either negligent or fearful of this process, which involves much of your own comfort, and of the glory of God by you. If you have given yourself to Christ, it is because God has led you to do so; and he has done this because he gave you to Christ in his eternal grace. If with lovingkindness he has drawn you, it is because he has loved you with an everlasting love. The flow of the stream is an indisputable evidence of the existence of the fountain, and it is at once fit and useful that we should acknowledge it, for this both glorifies God and comforts ourselves.

You will not, of course, presume upon your interest in God's electing love without satisfactory evidences of piety. This were as foolish as to judge of a tree otherwise than by its fruits. And it would be not only foolish, but dangerous too; since it would cherish an illusory confidence which might have the most fatal results.

Finally. What unspeakable beauty and dignity there is in the composite aspect of redemption! What vastness of bounty in the provision for a universal need, so that none are excluded from the feast! What blended wisdom and mercy in the treatment of a reluctant world, in drawing some guests to the table! To thee, O Lord, be glory for both!

LECTURE VI.

THE INSTRUMENTAL CAUSE OF REDEMPTION.

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."—*Acts* xx. 21.

WE have found the aspect of redemption to be twofold, in correspondence with the twofold aspect which our guilty race presents to the grace that bringeth salvation. In the first instance the God of love beholds a world ruined by sin, and he sends his only-begotten Son to open a way of salvation for all; in the second instance he beholds a world in stubborn unbelief rejecting the salvation provided, and he sends forth his Spirit effectually to reconcile some to himself. The latter of these processes is carried on in absolute withdrawal from human observation; not a sound indicates it, not a breath betrays it, until the divine operation manifests itself by its effects. The former of these processes stands in direct contrast with this. The gift of a Saviour for the world is both designed and adapted to awaken the attention, and to engage the action, of mankind. Without this, indeed, it brings no advantage. It has but placed man in a position of conditional hope, a position in which everything yet depends on the fulfilment of the condition enjoined. It now becomes of the greatest importance, therefore, to inquire

what the condition is on which human salvation is suspended. What God has done to lay the foundation of it we have seen, let us now endeavour to ascertain what we must do to secure the possession of it.

To the important and deeply interesting question which thus rises before us, the apostle, in the words of the text, gives a direct and explicit answer. It was the habit of his ministry, he tells us, to testify "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

On the hearing of these words it will immediately strike you, that this representation of the instrumental cause of our redemption is not simple, but twofold—"repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." It will readily occur to you also, that we have met with a twofold distinction analogous to this before. In the work of redemption God himself assumes a twofold attitude, the one personal and the other official; he acts both as a ruler and a father. To this twofold attitude of God in laying the basis of redemption, the twofold attitude of a sinner in seeking salvation corresponds—repentance to the personal, and faith to the official, aspect of the divine character; and, in considering these exercises, our best way will be to regard them as thus respectively related.

I. First, then, of the personal attitude which God assumes in redemption, and of repentance as related to it.

As a being of infinite purity, God must feel towards undutiful and rebellious children a holy displeasure of high intensity; nevertheless his heart yearns with love towards them, and he adopts measures for restoring them to his favour, while at the same time guarding his personal and parental honour. These measures we have seen to be comprehended in a system of mediation, the post of mediator between God and man being occupied by his well-beloved Son. Now the method by which an undutiful child is to avail himself of this benign arrangement is repentance. Let us consider, first, its nature; and, secondly, its adaptation.

1. In speaking of the nature of repentance, I may observe that, in its most general acceptation, it is a change of mind concerning either some deed done, or some course pursued, by ourselves. So it may be applied to any part of our conduct towards our fellow-men, or pre-eminently, as we now apply it, to our conduct towards God. The change, properly understood, is a total one; and may be viewed in three parts.

In the first instance it is strictly a change of mind, or views, with which all changes of character necessarily begin. A sinner repenting comes to entertain new views of sin, and of God against whom sin is committed, together with his relation and obligation to the author of his being. Once he thought very lightly of these, or perhaps set down his Maker as a hard master, and his service as a mean subjection; he regarded sin as easily capable, if not of vindication, at least of excuse, and, for the sake of its present pleasures, well worthy of the hazards it might eventually entail. But all things have changed their aspect now. He owns the title of the glorious Being who made him to his warmest love, and deems subjection to his righteous rule his highest honour; while sin, for the inexcusable culpability of which he has now no measure, has become the object of his severest condemnation.

In the natural course of things these new views forward their influence to the heart, and produce a corresponding change of the affections. The repenting sinner feels about sin far otherwise than he once did. Once he was at least indifferent to it, and could commit any amount of it without shame; while in various forms he loved it, and rolled its pleasures as sweet morsels under his tongue. But this, too, is changed. Sin is now the source of his most copious sorrow, and the cause of his bitterest self-reproach. His heart is humbled before God for the dishonour done to him, and melted into contrition, while sin has lost all its sweetness, and has become the thing which his soul hateth. Self-aborred, he now justifies God, whose righteous law he has learned to approve and to admire.

The change thus wrought in the affections speedily propagates itself in the life, which the affections govern. The repenting sinner's purposes and actions are now as different as his feelings. It is henceforth his grand aim to live a life of obedience and devotedness, and the entire energies of a reconciled and grateful heart are thrown into the effectuation of this purpose. He means to do everything by which his forgiving Father can be glorified; and, wherein he comes short of this cherished object, he mourns his deficiency, and sets himself anew to watch and pray.

The change thus manifested is one change, affecting the whole man; only, observing it in detail, we have noticed its

influence separately on the intellectual, the emotional, and the active powers. There are, however, some partially similar changes, or counterfeits of repentance, from which the genuine requires to be distinguished.

Repentance is to be distinguished from remorse. This is an affection often of great intensity, and is very liable to be mistaken for repentance, which, in some of its aspects, it may much resemble. The line of demarcation, however, may be clearly drawn. Repentance is sorrow for sin, remorse is sorrow for its consequences; repentance is loathing of self, remorse is hatred of God and of his government. In all the agonies of remorse there will be found no element of friendship, no sentiment of reconciliation to God, or to his law; all its exercises are resolvable into enmity, writhing under the lash of conscience, and the anticipation of judgment. Not so repentance. Love is at the root of this, the fountain of its griefs, the germ of its activities.

Repentance is to be distinguished from reformation. There is no repentance, indeed, without reformation, but there may be a certain amount of reformation without repentance. Even where the entire character is not changed, there are some motive powers in human nature by which a partial change may be effected. Conscience may be awakened, and some of the passions, as fear; and under these influences men may, like Herod, do "many things;" but such reformations are always both partial and temporary, and so become broadly distinguished, in course of time, from the reformation which is a constituent element of repentance. The true penitent abandons all sin, because he hates it all; and he abandons it for ever, because he hates it with all his heart.

Repentance is to be distinguished from penance. Penance is a voluntary suffering, sometimes imposed on themselves by persons whose consciences are uneasy, with a view to allay their self-reproach. From repentance all practices of this kind widely differ. It is evident that they may be resorted to, not only without any change of heart respecting sin, but with a view even to render the commission of sin more easy. There is also in them an idea of good desert, as though the voluntary suffering might have a meritorious, or expiatory, character; a sentiment at the utmost distance from the feelings of a truly repenting sinner, who rather covers himself with shame and confusion of face.

2. Having thus illustrated the nature of repentance, let us proceed to notice its adaptation to the end it subserves.

Of the actual sufficiency of repentance to obtain forgiveness of sins no doubt can be entertained. Such was the original Gospel call, when, under the direction of their divine Master, the disciples of Jesus "went forth, and preached that men should repent" (Mark vi. 12). Such was the proclamation of the glad tidings by the apostles after their Lord's ascension to heaven: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts iii. 19). The two are also closely connected in the declaration, "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31). The ground on which the sufficiency of repentance rests, however, requires to be carefully noted.

The meritorious ground which, in the system of mediation, is laid for the forgiveness of sin, is Christ's worthiness of such an expression of his Father's love to him. In this sense the apostle speaks, "Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32). Negatively, therefore, we may say that the sufficiency of repentance to obtain the forgiveness of our sins against God does not rest—

Either, first, on the natural availableness of repentance generally to obtain the forgiveness of offences. The offence in this case is too deep for this, as the institution of a system of mediation demonstrates.

Or, secondly, on anything meritorious in repentance itself. Although, certainly, so far as it goes, expressive of a right feeling, it is far beyond the power of repentance to compensate for the offence committed against God. It always leaves divine forgiveness to be an act, not of desert, but of favour.

Or, thirdly, on anything persuasive in the manner of its expression. It may be characterized by intense sorrow, by earnest entreaty, or by laborious devotedness; but, even if it were so, these are not the things which give it prevalence with God.

Positively, it is "for Christ's sake" that God forgives us; and this as a mode of recognizing his desert of the Father's love, and of recompensing the fidelity and sorrow by which it has been acquired. Hence, there must always be conceived to be in true repentance an acceptance of the mediation of Christ. This, indeed, would be a natural, and an immediate,

result of an altered mind towards God. A truly penitent sinner would most readily fall in with any arrangement which God, so justly and so deeply offended, might deem conducive to his parental dignity, and would, indeed, unspeakably regret to approach him in any way which might do him dishonour. The natural expression of his feelings might be found in the words of Peter, when he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8); while the discernment of some way, such as that afforded by the mediation of Christ, by which so undutiful a son might be re-introduced to the Father without subjecting him to indignity, would be absolutely necessary to his encouragement.

On the other hand, a rejection of the mediation of Christ, or a refusal to approach the Father in his name, however accompanied by efforts to obtain a direct access to him, would be an unquestionable evidence of an impenitent spirit. It would show that the undutiful child was still reckless of his father's honour, and prepared to trample on his will; and that he was, by the prevalence of such a spirit, utterly disqualified to resume with comfort his place in the family.

Acquiescence in the mediation of Christ, therefore, is made the condition of pardon because it is also the test of character. The existence of this one element implies the existence of all the rest, and its manifestation is all that is required to restore the offended to favour. No amount of unworthiness on his part can obstruct this result, since it is not for his own sake that he is received, but for the sake of another, whose worthiness is ample, and in proportion to whose worthiness the Father's love promptly flows forth to him.

While thus unequivocally recognizing the mediation of Christ, repentance comprehends also the germ of a new character. It is essentially reconciliation to the holiness and rule of the Father, and is a practical renunciation at once of the spirit and the practice of disobedience. The truly penitent will henceforth be prevaillingly, though not perfectly, dutiful and obedient; he will thus become a fit object for a holy Father's love, while his remaining imperfections will be covered by his being made "accepted in the beloved."

II. Such are the illustrations I have to offer of the personal attitude which God assumes in redemption, and of

repentance in relation to it ; let us now direct our attention to the official attitude which also God assumes in redemption, and to faith in relation to it.

In his official attitude God appears as a ruler, provoked to just anger by the disobedience of those subject to his government. As a magistrate, though disposed to mercy, he is obliged to punish sin ; but he is enabled, by a system of substitution and expiatory sacrifice, to clear from guilt and to treat as righteous every one who submits himself to it. Thus the apostle : " He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him " (2 Cor. v. 21). The response to this system of merciful treatment is faith. Let us consider its nature and adaptation.

1. In speaking of the nature of faith, our course must be different from that which we took in speaking of the nature of repentance. In relation to the latter of these there is no controversy, so that a few simple distinctions answered our purpose ; the true nature of faith, however, is a point much disputed, and it will be necessary for us to take some passing notice of the controversy.

Various views may be taken of faith, according to the mode in which the object of it is regarded. Sometimes, according to the language of Scripture, this is the Gospel, sometimes it is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Men are to be saved, either by believing the Gospel, on the one hand, or by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, on the other. In both these ways we arrive at the practical provision made for the salvation of men ; inasmuch as the Gospel proclaims what Christ has done for the redemption of the world, and believing implies the acceptance of the glad tidings it brings ; while believing in Christ, himself the Redeemer, implies submission to, and reliance upon, the work which he has accomplished. Such, in a few words, is our view of the nature of faith.

By some divines, however, a very different view has been entertained. They hold that saving faith is belief of the truth, such belief being simple, and differing in no way from our ordinary belief of matters of fact or testimony. Let us subject this view to a brief examination.

That there are passages of Scripture the words of which yield it an apparent support, cannot be denied. Of this class

are the following:—"Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark i. 15). "Go ye, and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 15, 16). "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. ii. 13). It is only an apparent support, however, that these passages give to the conception that saving faith is a simple belief of the truth. The word believe, as scripturally used in this connexion, carries with it an idea of welcome, or acceptance, and, in the circumstances, both naturally and inevitably so. Imagine a case of insurrection against a government, the sovereign issuing a proclamation of pardon on easy conditions, and the herald closing his proclamation with the words, Repent, and believe the glad tidings (the Gospel); is not the meaning evidently, *Accept* the glad tidings, or the pardon announced in them? It must be the same with respect to the glad tidings of salvation. Directly to this point is the language of the apostle, when he says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans x. 10). He speaks also of unbelievers as those who "received not *the love* of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. ii. 10).

We are told, indeed, that salvation depends not so much on the nature of the faith which is exercised, as on that of the truth which is believed; that it is the truth which saves, and that saving faith is simply the belief of saving truth. In this statement there is, we think, a double error. On the one hand, it is in no sense the truth that saves, the truth being merely another name for the announcement of the provision made for salvation; while, on the other hand, faith instrumentally (not, of course, meritoriously) does save. What we mean when we speak of saving truth (not, by the way, a scriptural expression), is merely the truth respecting the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer.

It is, we think, a fatal objection to the conception of faith as a mere belief of the truth, that such a faith is an element of no power in the formation of character. We know how confidently it is said that all real belief will be sure to be operative, but the erroneousness of such an opinion is demonstrated by its contrariety to the facts of human consciousness and experience. It accords with the rational

nature of man that our beliefs should not operate immediately, but through the intervention of the feelings, by the state of which the active power of our beliefs is greatly modified. Testimony which we cannot but believe may bring to us a proposal to which we may be either indifferent or averse, and in neither case will our belief be operative. And, with respect to the Gospel itself, the belief of it would seem to be as consistent with its rejection as with its acceptance, if not, indeed, equally necessary to both. This idea is evidently at the basis of our Lord's language, when he says of the unbelieving Jews, "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John xv. 24). Now, a kind of faith which is compatible with the rejection of the Gospel can scarcely be the faith that saves.

It is to be observed further, that there is another class of expressions by which the force of those which relate to the belief of the Gospel is clearly defined. When Christ himself is exhibited as the object of faith, we are said to believe *in* him, or *on* him. Here the word belief is evidently used in the sense of reliance, or trust, in relation to the character of a Saviour which Christ sustains, and his declared ability and willingness to save. Set forth for our trust as a Saviour, to believe in Christ is surely to place in him the confidence which he solicits.

Ultimately, the practical arrangement which God has made for our redemption by the substitution of his Son for us, is the true object of our regard in the exercise of mind which the Scriptures call faith. This arrangement is announced and presented to us for our acceptance or rejection, so that faith in Christ may be said to be the acceptance of it, and unbelief the refusal. Or, according to the language of the apostle, faith is submitting ourselves "to the righteousness of God" (Romans x. 3).

2. Such being the nature of faith, let us now notice its adaptation to the purpose which it serves in the economy of redemption.

The language of Holy Writ on this subject is copious and explicit. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

Now faith avails for the justification of a sinner before

God, not as a thing of speculation or opinion. In this respect a charge wholly without warrant has often been brought against the evangelical system—namely, that, making salvation depend upon faith, it makes salvation depend upon opinion, and rewards or punishes men for what they think. The answer to this objection is, that by those who make it faith is entirely misunderstood. When this word denotes the instrument of salvation, it describes, not an act of the understanding, but a state of the heart in relation to a matter understood,—the acceptance or refusal of a plan proposed by our Maker to us. We are thus carried far from the regions of speculation, and brought face to face with a question altogether practical. If saved or lost, it will not be for a matter of opinion, but for a deed towards God; one in which moral character must be emphatically expressed, and which may, consequently, most fitly be made the turning point of his treatment of us.

Neither does faith avail for the justification of a sinner before God on account of any excellency in itself. We are not here denying moral excellency (of which, indeed, it cannot be conceived to be destitute) to faith; we say only that it is not by its moral excellency it saves. Quite apart from this, faith has an instrumentality, or an aptitude to act as an instrument, in relation to the machinery of redemption, and to bring into bearing an arrangement prepared by God for our benefit. This arrangement is the substitution of his Son, Jesus Christ, for us, a process which is to be available for us if we submit to it; our submission, therefore,—that is, our faith—is just the critical point upon which our benefit from it depends. This arrangement of divine wisdom and mercy is complete and ample, and requires nothing to be added to it; we are consequently saved by faith only, without works of any kind, whether legal or evangelical, and whether before it or after it. As ungodly we are justified; and, although faith afterwards “worketh by love,” and purifies both the heart and the life, this neither adds anything to its justifying power, nor contributes to the validity of a transaction already perfected and past.

III. Such is the view which the Scripture presents to us of the instrumental cause of redemption; in correspondence with the two aspects of the divine Being, it consists of the two elements, repentance towards God, and faith towards our

Lord Jesus Christ. Some general views now present themselves to us on this interesting and important subject.

In the first instance the case may be viewed negatively.

If salvation is to be thus obtained, then it follows that it is not to be obtained in some other methods by which men in their ignorance are fond of seeking it. Some expect to be saved by fervent prayer, some by pure morals, and some by religious ordinances. Now, of none of these would we speak in terms of needless disparagement. For their several objects they are all good; only let it be understood what they are really good for, and let them be used accordingly. Assuredly, it is not according to the Scriptures to expect to be saved by any of them. Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, are distinct, and different, from them all; and, if put in the place of these, they are at once contrary to the tenor of the Gospel, and destructive to the souls of men.

Nor can there be said to be anything arbitrary in this decision; for none of the repudiated elements—neither prayer, nor morality, nor ordinances—will be found, either on the closest examination, or on the most candid estimate, to have any adaptation to the exigencies of the case. What can the most fervent prayer avail for the unworthy child, whose offence requires the intervention of a prevailing advocate? What can the purest morals avail for the guilty rebel, the reversal of whose doom demands the perfect satisfaction of a holy law? Or what can the most solemn ordinances avail for a sinner who is under righteous wrath, and whose person must first be justified before his services can be accepted? Assuredly, in the arrangements of his mercy, God has gone no deeper than the abyss of our ruin; nor has he called upon us to sacrifice any real element of value, or source of help. It is a necessity, and it ought to be a joy, to “count all things but loss for Christ.”

In the next place, the two elements we have had before us may be viewed in unison.

Repentance and faith are two exercises of the mind, inasmuch as they respond to two different aspects of the divine character, and they exhibit some appropriate diversities in themselves; yet the state of the heart expressed in them is essentially one and the same. It is, in one word, reconciliation to God, and it stands opposed to alienation from God, which

is the grand aspect of our state of sin, and the living root of all our disobedience. The removal of this alienation being supposed, and reconciliation taking its place, the natural and immediate manifestations of this new spirit are "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" a due response to the personal aspect on the one hand, and to the official aspect on the other, which God in redemption assumes.

In the third place, the instrumental cause of salvation may be viewed in connexion with the divine character.

In connecting salvation with such an instrumentality there is infinite fitness and wisdom, a fulness of blended dignity and grace. The simplicity and absoluteness with which repentance and faith bring into bearing his provision for the salvation of man, vindicate the honour of God, and leave him at perfect liberty to show the amplest mercy; while the least that possibly could be expected is required of man. "Not to him that worketh, but to him that worketh not," the blessing comes. It is his only to accept, and less could not be demanded of him.

And yet this little is influential and critical. It involves the bringing over of man entirely to God's view of the matters which have been in controversy, and his absolute surrender to God's method of dealing with him in mercy. By the appeal made to man God virtually asks the all-important question, Are you a friend, or an enemy? And the response gives a true and unequivocal answer. The state of mind upon which everything is thus made to depend, is no less essential to the happiness of man, than to his safety; while, at the same time, it contains the germ of that holiness of heart and life "without which no man can see the Lord." Most fitly is such an arrangement made imperative and final. How can he who refuses it be otherwise than undone? "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

Let us now endeavour to make some practical application of the thoughts which have been occupying us. Addressing myself, then, to a sinner yet in his sins, I say,—

First, understand your position. For your salvation you must do something, or you are lost. God, it is true, has taken on himself the burden of your redemption in its gravest aspects, but of you he requires something also. Do

not slumber, therefore, or resign yourself to inaction, as though all depended upon him. He has placed salvation within your reach, but it cannot be obtained without an awakened and earnest mind. What, then, are those things which are engaging you so intently? You ask, What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed? O! will you not begin to ask also, What must I do to be saved?

But, secondly, understand what you must do. Many mistakes are committed in this respect, and much toil is undertaken which must be characterized as, at best, labour in vain. What will you do? Perhaps, in your eagerness and alarm, you will throw yourself on your knees, and pray, it may be, with many tears. Perhaps, with a conscious resoluteness, you will apply yourself to reform the evils of your life, ready to cut off a right hand rather than fail of entering into heaven. Perhaps you will fling yourself on the services of religion, and try to find in baptism and the Lord's Supper, or in a more sedulous religionism, a mode of reconciling yourself to God. Alas! my friend, do not deceive yourself, nor make of things so good and useful in themselves the instrument of your soul's ruin. For, whatever these things can do, they cannot save you. In order to salvation, the apostle testified alike to all "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Will you do this? If you be in earnest, and your heart is really reconciled to God, you will, and this alone.

Thirdly, how encouraging and how delightful should the aspect of our subject be to you. Considering all your guilt, it had not been wonderful if God had required at your hands something of labour, or toil, or suffering; but behold—and admire—the freeness of redeeming mercy! Slain is the sin-atoning Lamb, and prepared is the living Intercessor to plead your cause. "All things are ready, Come!" Everything that involves either suffering or labour is already and perfectly accomplished for you by another's love and agony, and nothing remains for you but to accept the unspeakable grace. Can you do less than accept it promptly, and with a grateful heart? O do not say that you cannot; say rather, how can you help it, when so vast a power of motive presses upon your heart. You *cannot*? What, then, *can* you do? Nothing but, without cause, turn away from your Redeemer, and reject his salvation?

But your heart yields, and you at length submit yourself to the method of redeeming mercy. Thanks be to God for it! only, in your return to him, mark the two steps which are to be taken. First, deal with God as your Judge, and seek deliverance from condemnation. This, as I have explained to you, is to be obtained by faith in Christ, or acquiescence in his substitution for you as a sinner exposed to wrath. Then, through the mediation of Jesus, approach your Father for restoration to his love. Therein may you be happy, now and for evermore!

LECTURE VII.

THE PRACTICAL METHOD OF REDEMPTION.

“The ministry of reconciliation.”—2 *Corinthians* v. 18.

WE have arrived at the conclusion, that, in the great scheme of redemption, God has placed mankind universally in a position of conditional hope; and we have found the condition on which that hope is suspended to be the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It follows, of course, that God has also instituted means to bring men to the fulfilment of this condition. Let us now inquire into these; in other words, into the practical method which God in this respect has pursued.

To this inquiry it is easy in general terms to reply, that God's practical method with men must necessarily be one of persuasive appeal. This is the fitting, and the only fitting process. Now the elements of persuasive power lie in the great facts of redemption themselves, for therein “God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;” and his practical method towards mankind has always consisted in making manifest the knowledge of these facts. Beginning, indeed, at the beginning, from the first occurrence of mischief by sin he graciously announced his intended remedy, although he did not give at the outset a full and explicit declaration of it. On the contrary, he adopted a gradual,

and it might seem, also, a slow, development of this great theme: the first promise in Eden, the pregnant institution of sacrifice, the significant ritual of Moses, and the exciting declarations of the prophets, in succession occupying and cheering the long and gloomy ages, till the appearance of Jesus, the Christ. In his sufferings and death the great sacrifice for sin was accomplished, and, by his authority as a risen Saviour, was instituted a system of persuasive appeal explicit and universal. By him a commission was given to his disciples to "preach the Gospel to every creature," a process fitly called by the apostle "the ministry of reconciliation." In every subsequent age this process has been carried on; so that the Gospel ministry is a great fact in the history of mankind, corresponding to the great fact of redemption itself, and constituting the instrumentality which God has seen fit to employ for the reconciliation of the world to himself. Such a process cannot but be worthy of our serious consideration. Let us examine it in three aspects: first, its adaptation; secondly, its relations; and thirdly, its issue.

I. In considering the adaptation of "the ministry of reconciliation," we ask, substantially, whether the preaching of the Gospel is, as a means, adapted to its end; and, in order to ascertain this, we must inquire what elements are necessary to such an adaptation. Now these elements are two, and only two; one of them is the possession of rational faculties by the parties addressed, the other a duly persuasive power in the topics exhibited. Let us briefly direct our attention to these.

1. The first element necessary to the adaptation of "the ministry of reconciliation," is the possession of rational faculties by the parties addressed.

The space within which persuasion is applicable is limited by two extremes: on the one side, it is not applicable to creatures without reason, as to brutes; on the other, it is not applicable to beings in whom the faculty of reason is impaired, as to the insane: between these extremes, however, lies a large space, the whole of which is clearly available for the exercise of persuasion. Everywhere within this space is feeling intelligently cherished, with a capacity of modifying it by consideration. This is all that is required. It is then perfectly appropriate and reasonable to endeavour, by motives pre-

sented, either to excite a state of feeling which does not exist, or to alter one which does; and success may naturally be expected according to the aptness and power of the motives employed. Accordingly, to any sane man the persuasive appeal of the Gospel is fitly presented.

It may be said, however, in relation to the case as between man and God, that in man's heart there already exists a strong and decided aversion to God, so that persuasion will, at any rate, be of no use. This, however, is altering the question before us, which is not whether persuasion will be of any use, but whether it can be properly applied. Now the existence of feeling of a nature opposite to that which you wish to induce, although it may render your success improbable, can have no tendency whatever to render your attempt at persuasion absurd. It is the very scope and design of persuasion to contend with opposing feeling; and, whatever may be the amount of it, the appropriateness of the process is not affected. If I hate a man, you may fitly endeavour to reconcile me to him; and why may you not fitly make a similar attempt if I hate God?

There is no evading the force of this argument, but by maintaining that there is in man's heart towards God more than hostile feeling to be contended with. Some do this on the ground of the scriptural declaration that man is dead in trespasses and sins; and, as though the case were by the very words decided in their favour, they exclaim, Will you stand in a cemetery, and address persuasives to the dead? We have often heard this *ad captandum* appeal, but the real question is not so easily decided. Our contradicting friends have obviously misunderstood, and misused, a metaphor. They reason as if the Scriptures had said that men were *dead*, whereas they declare only that men are *dead in sin*. Now to be dead in sin is to be brought by sin, as it respects God, into a condition resembling death; that is to say, to a state of insensibility to his glory and his claims. It is a state of feeling merely which is thus metaphorically indicated, and a voluntary state, consequently, as all our states of feeling are.

That the insensibility of wicked men to divine things is voluntary, appears clearly from the language of our Lord addressed on one occasion to his disciples: "Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hear-

ing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew xiii. 13-15).

Here is a positive assertion that wicked men do both "hear" and "see," only they do not "perceive" and "understand;" that is to say, they are in possession of the faculties of hearing and seeing, but they do not employ them. And the reason is expressly assigned, they will not. "Their eyes have they closed," and "their ears are dull of hearing"—that is, disinclined to hear—"lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand, and be converted." Can it be more clearly laid down, that the inaccessibility of men to the Gospel arises, not from any want of capacity, but from a "heart waxed gross;" that is to say, from a prevalent and cherished sensuality, which causes them to turn away their eyes and ears from its appeal?

The general principle remains, therefore, that there is nothing in the enmity of man's heart to God which withdraws him from the proper scope of persuasive means. It cannot be necessary that he should first love God, in order to be fitly persuaded to love him; his enmity is the very state of mind to the alteration of which efforts of persuasion may be appropriately directed, the use of his rational faculties being the only necessary preparation for them.

2. The second element necessary to the adaptation of "the ministry of reconciliation" to the parties to whom it is addressed, is a duly persuasive power in the motives employed. This assuredly is abundantly found in the preaching of the Gospel.

First. How awful is the condition it assumes! Its first business is to tell of ruin, and to lay bare the sinfulness and misery of our race. It appeals to the actual facts of human life, and the unequivocal testimony of human consciousness, in support of its testimony that man universally is corrupt and abominable; it opens solemnly the unseen world, and declares that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven

against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men " (Romans i. 16).

Secondly. How grand are the facts it announces! It is its prerogative to proclaim that " God hath so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life " (John iii. 16). It reveals the eternal counsels in which this inscrutable marvel of divine mercy was generated and matured, and discloses the arrangements of divine wisdom by which the manifold difficulties of the work of redemption have been taken out of the way. It tells of Jesus, the mystery of his incarnation, the wonders of his life, and the greater wonders of his death; it shows him risen from the grave, and points us to the realm of glory where he sits exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins; " wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them " (Hebrews vii. 25). It anticipates his triumph on earth, and his return from heaven; it foretells his judgment of all nations, and his eternal glorification of his saints. What magnificent facts are these! Facts with which no others in the history of mankind, or in the ways of God, can for a moment be compared.

Thirdly. How touching are the motives it presents! As appealing to the sense of interest they are the weightiest possible. They relate to the well-being, not of the body, but of the soul; not of the present, but of the future; not of time, but of eternity; to interests in comparison with which all others sink into insignificance. As appealing to the sense of duty they are of still graver moment. They exhibit to us, and enforce upon us, our obligation towards God, assuredly the most righteous and imperative of all the obligations under which we lie, and one to which, if we be not dead to all sense of right, we shall manifest the quickest and keenest sensibility. And, finally, as appealing to our sense of gratitude they are moving beyond description. What can touch a heart which does not feel, in view of a holy and glorious God, provoked to righteous vengeance, yet melting in pity over rebels whom he might justly destroy, and bringing from the depths of his own bosom the tenderly beloved, the Lamb for a sin-offering? or in view of that mysterious agony which Christ endured in Gethsemane and on Calvary, when his soul

was made an offering for sin, and the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all? Motives such as these are immeasurably in advance of all other motives which can be presented to the human heart; and whoever is dead to these assuredly ought to be dead to all besides.

Fourthly. How persuasive is its method of appeal! The Gospel is not, as it might have been, written, as with a sun-beam, on the starry sky, or carried round the world by the wheels of his blazing chariot; it is not, as it might have been, proclaimed to us by the trumpet of an angel, or sung by a glad chorus of the heavenly host. "The ministry of reconciliation" makes a condescending approach to us. Our fellow-men, and once our fellow-sinners, are employed to convey the glad tidings to us, and they are commissioned to use terms of gentle entreaty. "As though God did beseech you by us," said the apostle, "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20). The Most High thus condescends to plead with us in order that his terrors may not make us afraid, and that he may bring into bearing upon us influences at once the most tender and the most powerful.

Assuredly such a persuasive appeal is not only duly, but wonderfully, adapted to its end. It is sustained by motives of power without a parallel, motives by which man's heart, while it is sensible to motives at all, ought to be ruled; and by which, if attention can be gained to them, it will and must be ruled. The true difficulty is not to yield to them, but to resist them, a result which can be accomplished only by resolute inattention and neglect.

II. There is no want of adaptation, therefore, in "the ministry of reconciliation," since it abundantly possesses both the elements required; it addresses rational beings by appropriate and weighty motives. Let us now proceed, therefore, to the second part of our subject, and consider the relations which "the ministry of reconciliation" holds.

The relations which "the ministry of reconciliation" holds to the divine administration are two; the one direct, and the other collateral.

I. To the work of redemption "the ministry of reconciliation" holds a direct and immediate relation. It carries forward at once the great design of that work, by an earnest effort, and, as we have seen, a wonderfully adapted effort, to win man's heart to God.

2. Besides this, however, "the ministry of reconciliation" holds a collateral relation to the moral government of God, and a relation which it is of great importance to discern and appreciate.

It is under the moral government of God—or his government of man by the precepts and recompenses of his moral law—that sin, which has furnished the occasion of redemption, has occurred; and, of course, it is under it also that the work of redemption has been undertaken. Although not originally a part of the moral government of God, it must harmonize with it; and, in the point now before us, the two become closely linked together.

"Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," are not simply permitted as means of salvation, or even invited and encouraged by force of persuasion; they are made matters of command, enjoined by authority, and enforced by retribution. They are called for by God as the moral governor, and required as acts of obedience. In this manner "the ministry of reconciliation" becomes an enlarged development of God's moral government, and a new department of its administration. It is by his authority as moral governor that he "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30); and that he will introduce the sin of unbelief among items for judgment in the proceedings of the last day. Nor can anything be more equitable. Repentance and faith are, in truth, but forms of that supreme love to God which is the great and all-inclusive requirement of the moral law, and the requirement of them is made under circumstances containing abundant elements of responsibility.

And, while "the ministry of reconciliation" thus constitutes a department of the moral government of God, it constitutes, in some sense, the most important department of it. It constitutes the case in which responsibility is greatest, in which character is most strongly expressed, and in which retribution will be most awful. Unbelief will be emphatically *the sin* for which men will be judged, the sin by which, so to speak, all others, however heinous, will be put into the shade, as by faith in Christ all others would be blotted out. "This," said our Lord, "is THE CONDEMNATION, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19).

It is at once interesting and important to observe how the

two grand portions of the divine administration towards mankind are thus closely linked together. As works of one God they constitute in fact but one system, and are pervaded by the same great principles of righteousness.

III. Let us now proceed to notice, in the third place, the issue of "the ministry of reconciliation."

What will the issue of "the ministry of reconciliation" be? is a question to which it is not to be supposed we should be able to give, conjecturally, an absolute answer. What should we suppose it would be? From the nature of the case, we might naturally and certainly anticipate a universal and joyous reception of it; for who can imagine tidings of such infinite gladness to be treated with disregard? Yet, from a knowledge of our own hearts, and a perception of the humbling tendency of the way of salvation, we might not unnaturally calculate on some cases of refusal; but scarcely, under any considerations, could we anticipate an absolute and universal rejection.

We are not left, however, on this matter, either to our own conjectures or to uncertain information. Christ himself knew, and beforehand he has told us, in these memorable words: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John vi. 44). You are familiar with this phraseology—"No man *can* come unto me"—and know that it is intended to denote the wilful refusal of redeeming mercy. We learn, therefore, from indisputable authority, the grave and humbling fact that, from man, the Gospel will meet with a universal rejection.

The fact which we have thus before us is a deeply interesting and solemn one, and it suggests many questions. Its principal aspects are three: first, it has an aspect towards man; secondly, it has an aspect towards God; and, thirdly, it has an aspect towards the Gospel ministry itself. Let us briefly examine each of them.

1. In examining the aspect of this fact towards man, we may observe, first, that it is not unintelligible. It is true that the Gospel does appeal to man by motives of surpassing power; yet it does not speak of what is agreeable to man's heart, but, on the contrary, exhibits much that is displeasing to it. It enforces obligation and duty, it accuses of sin, both external and internal, it thwarts indulged passions, it requires humiliation and self-renunciation, it challenges supreme atten-

tion to things spiritual and future, it aims to bring all things into subjection to Christ. Now selfishness and pride, sensuality and worldliness, combine to produce a profound indifference towards, and an active alienation from, all the great subjects to which the Gospel relates. An enemy to God, man in his cherished rebelliousness cares not for reconciliation to him, and cannot be engaged to listen even to terms of peace; or, if he listens to them, he does not like them, nor will he even reflect on anything so humbling and so pure.

The case is by no means one that stands out in an attitude of singularity. It is one, unhappily, of a large group, and has many parallels in this wretched world. Passion and prejudice are in many instances stubborn, and even insuperable, things. The habitual drunkard turns a deaf ear to all entreaties to sobriety of life, and the frivolous youth will not be recalled from the scenes of giddy mirth by which he is fascinated. The reason in such cases is but too plain; and the reason why a sinner disregards the call to return to God is as easily understood.

The universal rejection of the Gospel, however, while by no means unintelligible, affords an awful measure of human depravity. What must the moral condition of a race be, every individual of which will reject a provision for their welfare at once so important and so kind! O man, see here thyself! how capable thou art of trampling, not only on just obligation, but on infinite grace; not only on thy righteous Lawgiver, but on thy compassionate Redeemer! How glad one would have been for the honour of human nature, if, but in a single instance, it had been otherwise! Poor fallen race! Is there not even one among thy sons of boasted wisdom and virtue to retrieve thy shame?

2. When we look at the aspect towards God of the universal rejection of the Gospel, we must at once acknowledge it to be a melancholy issue of a system of divine benignity and wisdom. Alas! that such a salvation should have been wrought, and such an announcement of it made, only to be neglected and despised! The contemplation of such an issue raises some interesting questions, into which, perhaps, with reverence, we may endeavour a little way to enter.

First, with such a prospect, was "the ministry of reconciliation" worthy of God?

Viewed simply in relation to the happiness of mankind, it

may be said without hesitation that it was not so, since the happiness of mankind is in no degree promoted by it. In this respect, it must sadly be pronounced a failure, and a waste; and, indeed, worse than this, since the Gospel ministry neglected and despised becomes an occasion of fresh guilt, and more aggravated condemnation. This, however, is taking too narrow a view of the subject. From a truer and more elevated stand-point, "the ministry of reconciliation" will assume a different character.

Neither the whole, nor the highest, end of God in his ways is the well-being of creatures, but the manifestation of his own glory. Now, the glory of God is manifested in "the ministry of reconciliation" in two ways. On the one hand it is a display of infinite grace and condescending mercy, the honour of which remains to him, although the acceptance of it is spurned by mankind. On the other hand, it is, as I have shown, an enlarged development of his moral government. Thus, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, God will be glorified, both by a direct display of his character, and by a noble expansion of his moral administration. The latter will constitute a new method of benign and equitable probation, of singular excellency and beauty.

It may be asked, indeed, whether that is really a state of probation of which God foreknows the result? The answer to this question is, that it is not easy to see how God's foreknowledge of the result can make any difference as to the probationary character of the system, inasmuch as it is not God who is to be proved, but man. On such a supposition, as God foreknows all things, no form of probation would be possible. Indeed, if God did not foresee the issue of a probationary system, it were a pity he should institute one, since he could not make provision for the remedial treatment of its contingent failure. It is evident, however, that whether a method is probationary or not must depend on the elements introduced into it, and the end to which it is directed, quite independently of any foreknowledge of its result.

Secondly, it here occurs to us to ask, Will God abandon "the ministry of reconciliation" to such an issue as a universal rejection?

In reply to this question, we answer, first, that universally he might do so, without either wrong to mankind, or dishonour to himself. The arrangement in all its parts is, not

only absolutely equitable, but eminently kind; and, if it be rejected, the blame and the dishonour fall entirely on the guilty rejector himself. It can be neither injustice to them, nor shame to him, to leave them to perish who "neglect so great salvation."

We answer, secondly, that God will not modify the result of "the ministry of reconciliation" in any such manner as to cast a slur on the method itself, in respect of either its equity, its benignity, or its wisdom. On the contrary, he will assuredly honour his own work, expressive as it is of his profoundest and noblest thoughts. Yet hypothetical cases are of easy conception, in which an opposite effect would be produced. A slur would be cast on "the ministry of reconciliation," for example, if the entire race of man were in any method to be saved notwithstanding their rejection of it; a case in which it might be inferred that God knew he had subjected mankind to an unfair trial, and that, consequently, he shrank from carrying it out to its extreme result. Nothing of this kind will he do. "The ministry of reconciliation" shall at his hands suffer no dishonour.

Yet, we answer, thirdly, will God, for his own sake, and for Christ's sake, effect some modification in the result of this system. It would not, on the whole, please him that his gracious invitation should be universally rejected, and that his table, so richly spread, should be totally destitute of guests. Still less would it be satisfactory to him, that a redemption obtained at so costly a price should bring no return of love and gratitude to the heart of him who humbled himself so deeply to accomplish it. Jesus must have a worthy recompense for the travail of his soul. And he shall have one. For his sake the Father will overlook the criminal obstinacy of mankind, and will send his Spirit to take out of them a people for his name. The Good Shepherd shall have a numerous flock, to whom, as first given to him, he shall give eternal life. "My sheep," says he, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John x. 27). Behold the chosen of the Father's wisdom and grace to be the Son's eternal joy!

3. The foreseen universal rejection of "the ministry of reconciliation" has an aspect towards the preaching of the Gospel itself. It seems to throw this labour into a position unsatisfactory, and, as it may seem, absurd.

If the pride and prejudice of men be such that the Gospel will be universally refused, it may be asked where is the use of preaching it? To this it may be answered, that, in any event, and supposing the refusal to be actually universal, the Gospel ministry carries out a system by which God manifests his glory; and we ought to be pleased to co-operate in this. Although the salvation of men should be a very important object with us, it should not be our only, or our highest, object. One is presented to us of a still nobler character, namely, the glory of God; and we should be content to pursue this, even if, under his permission, the other fail. The Gospel is God's last and grand appeal to man's heart; and it ought to be our joy to do all we can to carry it home, whatever reception it may meet with there.

Not all, however, will refuse. There is a people to be redeemed, whom God foreknows, and whom he will search out, and bring to himself by his Spirit. Zion's children "shall be all taught of God," and the Saviour's anticipation shall be fulfilled, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John vi. 37). There is, therefore, in this respect, for the labours of the Gospel ministry a sure and blessed recompense.

It may then be asked, Where is the use of employing universal means, when only the elect are to be saved? We answer that, the elect being personally unknown, the system of means under which they are called must necessarily be universal. Besides which, the means employed have an important practical relation to all, although not all are to be saved by them. If the actual saving of men were the only end of the preaching of the Gospel, the case would be different; but, in truth, it fits all for judgment, although it may not bring all to heaven.

However, if there be any to whom the interference of sovereign grace with the success of a preached Gospel is incurably distasteful, I content myself with putting to them two questions. The first is—Do you think you can reasonably require that God should save all men, let them do what they will? The second is—Would you really rather that the issue of a preached Gospel should be left absolutely to man's own heart? Surely the grace is rather to be admired, which, when all refuse, sweetly brings some to Jesus.

But the redeemed, it may be complained, will be so few.

To this I answer, that they will, at any rate, be more according to discriminating grace than without it; since, in the latter case, they would be none at all. But I may demand further, How does any one know that the elect are few? We rejoice to believe, on the contrary, that they will constitute "a multitude which no man can number." At all events, according to ancient prediction, Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah liii. 11); and may not what satisfies him satisfy us also?

In any case, however, whether we murmur or consent, the fact remains. Left to themselves, all men will reject the Gospel; but, under the sovereign influence of the Holy Spirit, the elect of God will believe and obey it. According to the testimony of the apostle, God "hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. ii. 13).

Having thus contemplated "the ministry of reconciliation" in its adaptation, its relations, and its issue, let us now attend to the practical uses of our subject.

1. I address myself, in the first place, to hearers of the Gospel, and I say to them two things.

First, know your privilege. With a view to reconcile you to himself, God addresses you in language adapted to your rational powers, and appeals to you by motives pre-eminently fitted to prevail with you. To awaken your conscience, he tells you of the righteousness of his law. To move your fear, he shows you the terrors of his wrath. To subdue your enmity, he reveals to you the depths of his love. In order to win your hearts, he opens to you his own. There is nothing which, in this last age of the world, he does not declare, by which a subduing influence might be exerted upon you. Surely it is not for *you* to be indifferent, or rebellious. Which of the motives that your heart ordinarily feels has God not employed? And, if you acknowledge their power in all other cases, why should they not operate upon you in this? O reflect on them, and give them at least an opportunity of making their way to your hearts! Reflect on them, and see whether it is in the power of even a heart like yours to resist their sway.

Secondly, remember your responsibility. For such an appeal you will assuredly have to answer. And what answer can you give, if it be refused? Will you not be covered with

shame and confusion of faces, in the day when you stand before God in judgment? For what reason are you now turning a deaf ear to the entreaties of divine mercy, but that you love the world and your sins so well? And this amidst the light and the love of the world's last age! Verily, this will be your condemnation, "that light is come into the world, and you have loved darkness rather than light, because your deeds were evil" (John iii. 19).

In comparison with such culpability, the iniquities of dark ages, and those of pagan lands, sink almost into insignificance. Oh! were Jesus himself in the midst of us, how forcibly he might renew the upbraidings which he uttered on the sea of Galilee! "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for, if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for, if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee" (Matthew xi. 20-24). O heedless hearer of the Gospel! shall it not be more tolerable even for Capernaum in the day of judgment, than for thee?

2. I address myself, in the second place, to preachers of the Gospel.

It is for us solemnly to remember, that, in preaching the Gospel, we are conducting "the ministry of reconciliation," and carrying out on God's behalf the practical method of redemption. It is for God we speak, as ambassadors of the King of kings, and, when we plead, it is as though God did beseech men by us. How faithful and fervent should be our words! Of what infinite moment it is that we should speak of God the thing that is right, and correctly represent him to his rebellious creatures; and that our spirit of love should acquire an ardour, making at least some humble approach to his own! Well may we say with an apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And what could we do under such a burden, if, with him, we might not add, "Our sufficiency is of God"? (2 Cor. iii. 5.)

Let us, however, anticipate without dismay the result of our ministry. It may, indeed, in part, be at once humbling and painful. Some will reject our message, and to them we shall be nothing but an occasion of fresh iniquity, "a savour of death unto death." Others, however, will, through grace, believe and be saved. God will not withhold his blessing, in some gracious measure, from a faithful ministry, and he that soweth precious seed, although in tears, shall yet reap, and reap in joy (Psalm cxxvi. 5). But in neither case shall we be without our reward. With the apostle, amidst his mingled successes and conflicts, we may humbly say, "Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish" (2 Cor. ii. 14, 15).

LECTURE VIII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF REDEMPTION.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."—*Ephesians i. 3.*

WE have latterly been looking at redemption in its universal aspect, contemplating the provision which is made for the salvation of the world, the condition on which salvation is suspended, and the method employed to lead men to the possession of it. Let us now revert to redemption in its particular aspect, and contemplate its results in those cases in which God is pleased, by his Spirit, to render his Word effectual, and to vouchsafe, through faith, an actual participation of its privileges.

There are many reasons for believing that the blessedness of redemption must be great. The greatness of the ruin from which it is a rescue, and to which it must bear a fitting correspondence; the greatness of God by whom it is wrought, and of whose majesty and grace it must, doubtless, be worthy;

the greatness of the method by which it is accomplished, a marvellous scheme of which it must be a proportionate fruit; and the greatness of the expenditure at which it was effected, for which it must be an adequate compensation—all lead to the expectation of a great felicity. Without dwelling on these general considerations, however, let us now inquire wherein the blessedness of redemption specifically consists, and in what view it may be most distinctly apprehended.

The privileges of believers in Jesus are not only great, but diversified, and they might well repay a detailed consideration. This will be manifest from a mere enumeration of a few of them—as pardon of sin, justification, adoption, communion with God: I propose, rather, however, as a course which will better agree with my present object, to group them together, and to view them in association. They will be found easy of classification. By sin against God we forfeit an original position of distinguished happiness, and subject ourselves to penalties of fearful amount. The first and simplest idea of the blessedness brought to us in redemption, therefore, is that of deliverance, or freedom from the ruinous consequences of sin; a second idea of the blessedness included in redemption is restoration, or the recovery of man's original position; and a third idea of the blessedness included in redemption—that of exaltation—will be suggested to us by the scriptural language employed in our text. We shall notice these three elements in their order.

I. In the first place, we contemplate the blessedness of redemption under the idea of deliverance—of deliverance, that is to say, from the ruinous consequences of sin.

Now the ruinous consequences of sin are twofold, corresponding with the twofold aspect of the character of God.

In the first place, sin is to be regarded as rebellion under God's moral government, and a violation of his righteous law, to the penal sentence of which, accordingly, it subjects the transgressor.

Nothing can be more awful than this aspect of a sinner's condition. Well did the Psalmist exclaim of old, when wrapt in contemplation of the glory of God, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" (Psalm xc. 11.) Not in raging fire and flame, but deep-felt in the awakened conscience, is "the wrath of God," which "is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men" (Romans i. 18).

It is man's most utter and overwhelming misery. The metaphors employed to represent it are the most appalling which terrestrial objects can supply. The words used to express it are the most vehement which human language can afford. Take, for illustration, a single example from the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where the apostle declares that God will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every man that doeth evil" (Romans ii. 8, 9).

In this view of man's ruined condition by sin, it is much indeed to say that deliverance is achieved for him, or, in the words of Scripture, that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans viii. 1). The cancelling of such a curse is itself almost a heaven.

In the second place, sin is to be regarded as a personal offence against God, and in this view it brings on the sinner the loss of his favour.

This also, although not described by words so terrible as those which exhibit the curse of the law, is so adapted to man's nature as to become a source of profound suffering. It is no less justly than emphatically said of God, that "in his favour is life" (Psalm xxx. 5). It is that in which man's highest and only real happiness consists, the only happiness which is worth living for, or in which all his powers can be satisfied. Its forfeiture is the greatest calamity and loss to which man can be subjected. If rebellion is avenged by judgment, personal offence is punished by holy displeasure; if the former is adapted to the conscience, the latter is adapted to the heart, and is fitted to be a source of at least equal, if not of greater, sadness. Sin thus felt becomes indeed a burden too heavy to be borne.

It is in relation to sin as thus exposing us to God's personal displeasure, that the Scripture speaks of forgiveness; as in Ephesians i. 7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And the privilege is, indeed, unspeakably precious. How sweet to feel the sense of God's holy displeasure passing away; and to hear him say, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will no more remember thy sins" (Isa. xliii. 25).

II. In the second place, we contemplate the blessedness of redemption under the idea of restoration—of restoration,

that is to say, to the position forfeited by sin. This idea evidently carries us further than that on which we have just been dwelling.

First, we treat this subject in relation to God officially. In this view, ours is the position of a rebel. Now it is one thing, and undoubtedly a most important thing, for a rebel to be not condemned, and so not subjected to the execution of the penalty he has incurred, for hereby his life is spared; but it is quite another thing, and one of far greater value, for a rebel to be restored to his social position, and to stand among men as though the charge of treason had never been proved against him. In human affairs such a felicity would seem to be impossible; but even such is the privilege of believers in Jesus. This idea is conveyed to us by the scriptural term "justified." Thus, while it is said that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," it is said also that we are "justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1). These terms are far from being equivalent; the latter goes much further than the former.

In order to a clear and easy understanding of the word justify, however, it should be recollected that it is employed as a judicial term, and in connexion with a legal process. It does not mean that believers are *made* just, a change of character which would rather be denoted by the word sanctification; but it means that believers are *accounted* just. And when it is objected to this, that God cannot be conceived to account men just who are not so, our reply is, that this is merely a refusal to admit the idea of a judicial process; since, in a judicial process, and for a judicial purpose, it is quite possible for a person to be accounted that which he really is not. Thus, in a legal point of view, God justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus, so that they are accounted righteous, and judicially treated as if they were so.

This is a most interesting view of a believer's privilege. It may receive illustration from its analogy to circumstances easily conceivable in human affairs. Let us suppose, for example, a person guilty and convicted of treason in some aggravated form, but, by an extraordinary exercise of sovereign clemency, favoured with a free pardon. His release from the legal penalties of his offence is undoubtedly a great benefit, but his position in society is still painfully modified by it. He returns to life, not as in his pristine state of

virtue and loyalty, but with the taint of his crime about him, everywhere recognized as having been a traitor, and shunned as one by all honourable persons. To some minds, life under such circumstances would be scarcely worth possession. How painful it would be if anything like this should attach to the condition of a forgiven sinner against God; if the memory of his crime, which has been much more heinous than that of treason against an earthly sovereign, should permanently adhere to him, and, as he walks abroad in God's creation, become an occasion of avoidance and reproach! Is it not well that God has provided for sinners who believe in Jesus a mode of justification, or of being accounted righteous, by the judicial administration before which they have been brought as criminals, and from which they shall go forth as though they had committed no crime? In a righteousness imputed to them, and legally regarded as if it were their own, they are enabled to appear, not only without shame, but with honour, in the universe of God.

Secondly, we treat this subject in relation to God personally. A word is used in Scripture to describe the relation of repenting sinners towards God, which carries our ideas far beyond the mere fact, however blessed, of forgiveness. "Wherein," says the apostle, "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 6). I stop for the present at the first part of this phrase—God has "*made us accepted.*" Here is the idea, not only of offence forgiven, but of personal and entire restoration to favour, as though the offence had never been committed. We know how easily these two things may be separated in man's heart, and how difficult, indeed, it is to combine them; they are combined, however, in God's regard towards penitent sinners, who are not forgiven only, but beloved.

This, also, is at once necessary and important. An undutiful child merely forgiven, might occupy a place in the family at once mortifying and unhappy. His folly might be so remembered against him, that his place among the children might be humiliating, and even his intercourse with his father not entirely at ease. To feel himself perfectly restored to favour is necessarily the essential element of his happiness. So, and still more so, with the children of God. Mere forgiveness were to them at once a great and a defective felicity; but to be "*made accepted,*" to be regarded

with perfect love, as though sin had never been, this is a privilege and joy unspeakable.

III. In the third place, we contemplate the blessedness of redemption under the idea of exaltation—of exaltation, that is to say, to a state of privilege never before attaching to humanity.

Without depreciating in any degree the happiness of man's first estate, it may be truly said, that much of the language of Scripture indicates for believers a condition far exceeding it.

1. So with respect to justification. I have already spoken of it as a great privilege to be justified, or to be accounted righteous, by the government of God; but our idea of this privilege will be carried much further, if we take into account the manner in which this is effected. The ground of our justification is the substitution of Christ for us, and the imputation of his righteousness to us. So that, to avail ourselves of a familiar metaphor, we may be said to be clothed in Christ's righteousness, which becomes to us the robe of salvation and the garment of praise.

What a distinguished honour is this! We come forth from our arraignment before the tribunal of God, arrayed in a robe of righteousness which is not our own, but which has been wrought by the Saviour's own obedience and agony. How perfect, and how glorious! This is a more beautiful robe than angels wear. A human righteousness, even had it been pure without a spot, could never have exhibited such a lustre.

2. So in our acceptance with God. I have noticed particularly the expression used by the apostle, in a passage recently quoted—"He hath made us accepted *in the beloved*." There is great force in this expression. It denotes more than even a perfect restoration to God's favour; it teaches that the love which he bears to repenting sinners is similar to that which he bears to his own Son. And this idea is confirmed by the words of our Lord at the conclusion of his intercessory prayer—"That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them" (John xvii. *ult.*).

How pre-eminent a privilege is this! Jesus is emphatically called "the beloved" of God. What can compare with the infinite benignity and complacency with which the eternal Father loves his only-begotten Son! Yet in him are peni-

tent sinners accepted, that the same love may flow down through this medium to them. Even sinless man had never been loved like this.

And while this privilege is pre-eminently great in itself, out of it is evolved much more. Hence springs God's fatherly relation to us, and our filial relation to him. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also our God and Father in him : hence, says the apostle, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians iii. 26). And out of this fatherly relation flows an infinity of blessedness. Among the elements of this blessedness the following particulars may be enumerated.

(1). An interest in God's love, in all its height and depth, and length and breadth ; a love which is infinitely tender, prompt, inexhaustible, and imperishable ; which watches all circumstances, and commands all resources.

(2). The privilege of communion with him at all seasons ; with freedom of access and assured welcome, and with encouragement to come to him as children to a father, "able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephes. iii. 20).

(3). The effusion of a filial spirit, corresponding with our relation to him. "For we," says the apostle, "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15).

(4). The renovation of our nature in his own image, fundamentally in the act of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and progressively by the blended influence of his Spirit and his Word, accomplishing in the end our entire sanctification.

(5). The kind reception and large reward of devoted service ; a service many opportunities of rendering which are presented to us, and none of our endeavours to improve them will be forgotten.

(6). A place in the Father's house above, and a portion in the heavenly inheritance ; an eternal residence with him in holiness and glory unspeakable, and in a position more honoured and exalted than that of angels.

But who shall do justice to the themes which the mere enumeration of these topics suggests ? Assuredly, redemption has not been wrought for a trivial result. From its deep fountain in the heart of God divine love has flowed forth in a copious stream, till, like a boundless ocean, it has

overflowed and buried the hugest mountains of human guilt and wretchedness.

We may well ask with astonishment, How can these things be? The spectacle of guilty and rebellious worms so highly favoured is strange, almost to the inconceivable. It is true, indeed, that all is in harmony with the grace that bringeth salvation, and for his own sake, doubtless, God has done it, that the results of redemption may be worthy of himself. But there is a further question which we may ask—namely, Is any ground laid in the work of redemption for such an overflow of grace?

And the answer to this question is not difficult. The apostle himself suggests it to us in the words of our text: God “has blessed us with all spiritual blessings,” he tells us, “in Christ.” The work of redemption has been accomplished in such a manner that, if the redeemed be not worthy of reward, the Redeemer is so, and of reward unbounded. In his interposition for a guilty world, Christ has acquired a pre-eminent title to his Father’s love. His deep concern for his Father’s honour; his prompt concurrence in the Father’s purposes of grace, and his cheerful readiness, at any sacrifice, to carry them out; his burning jealousy for the Father’s holiness, the unshrinking step with which he trod the whole of his path of sorrow, and the filial submission with which he drank, even to its dregs, the cup of woe, have created a claim without parallel to loving recompense. The eternal Father could not lie under obligations like these without requiting them. “Therefore,” said the Lord of old by the mouth of his prophet, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah liii. 12).

But what can be given to Jesus, already in possession, as the Son of God, of infinite dignity and blessedness, or what that can be considered as a recompense for such fidelity and humiliation? To himself nothing; but something may be given to the guilty and undone for whom his sorrows were endured, which, being given for his sake, will be as given to himself, and will constitute to his loving heart a sweet reward. And what is thus given must undoubtedly be rich

and bountiful, since it is to be the counterpart of his obedience unto death, and the substantial expression of the Father's love to him. Hence this overflow of grace to the guilty and the lost: it represents the obligation under which the Father feels himself to the Son, and constitutes the recompense in which Christ is for ever to rejoice. So, in making Christ one with us, God has prepared the way for treating us as one with him.

And now, what improvement shall we make of this interesting theme?

First, let me address myself to the believer in Jesus. Believer in Jesus, all this is thine!

Compare it with what once was thine, when, as a rebel against God, thou didst stand under his deserved wrath, and hadst naught before thee but an eternity of perdition and woe. How changed thy condition now, and how unspeakable thy obligation to thy Redeemer's love! Wilt thou ever forget the Author of such privileges, or fail in the due return of gratitude and consecration?

Understand what now is thine. Let not thy privileges be unto thee as a treasure unknown, because unexplored. Trace them out in meditations on their nature and excellency, and endeavour to enter into an experimental enjoyment of them. Thou wilt find blessed occupation here, and pleasures ever new. How little, in comparison with their amplitude, hast thou yet realized of them! How few drops hast thou tasted of this inexhaustible fulness! Of how much a busy world robs thee! And how much an unbelieving heart fails to appreciate! O know thy treasures, and enjoy them!

Anticipate what shall yet be thine. What is done for thee here is but a sample and a foretaste of that which is to be done hereafter. Blessed is thy condition now; but this is as nothing when compared with the fulness of joy which alone can satisfy the heart that has loved thee so well. Thou art yet to be in a state in which it shall form a part of Christ's reward to see thee. How perfect must be that bliss! How exalted thine eternal glory!

O Christian, be happy and thankful! If in the midst of poverty and trial, yet be happy and thankful! There can be no condition in which thou mayest not, shouldest not, say—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus."

Finally, if I have one word to say to the unbeliever, it is simply this—O sinner, what art thou losing? “All spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” thou tramplest under foot, and hastest after the pleasures and profits offered thee by a vain world. What shadows they are thou graspest! And can these, after all thy pursuit of them, make thee any recompense for the inestimable treasure thou art despising? Alas! poor wretch! sorrowfully poor now, and utterly destitute in the world to come. And is this wretched poverty thy fixed and irrevocable choice? Can no voice of entreaty win thee to bliss—win thee to Jesus? Come, for yet he calleth thee! Thou art still welcome to his footstool, to his cross; to the peace and pardon he has procured, to the grace and glory he bestows.

LECTURE IX.

THE MORAL ADAPTATION OF REDEMPTION.

“Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.”
—*Ephesians* i. 8.

God’s work of redemption lies apparently open to a grave practical objection. To forgive aggravated iniquities, and to load with unparalleled favours an enemy and a rebel, may be very kind, but is it very wise? Is it prudent to deal after such a manner with such a being?

Look at the facts of the case. Here is a creature, who, being the subject of a most righteous and excellent government, without cause rebels, and subjects himself to a fearful, but equitable, sentence of condemnation; at the same time, by corrupt and unholy conduct he incurs the deep displeasure of his Maker (who is also his Ruler), and thus is thrown to an awful distance from him. This creature in his deserved wretchedness God pities, and regards with such boundless grace that he originates a method of deliverance and salvation for him, however vile; a method devised with profound skill, and carried out at an immeasurable cost; a redemption to him absolutely free, and made attainable on the easiest

possible condition ; and a redemption comprehending in its consummation an amount of blessedness such as never could have pertained to the rebel's original position.

Such, in a few words, are God's dealings of mercy towards man ; and one of the questions to which a consideration of them gives rise is this—What is likely to be the effect of all this upon man himself ? Is not such an overflow of favour adapted to generate in him light thoughts of sin ; to inspire him with a low estimate of the character and government of God ; and to encourage him in a farther indulgence of his corrupt and rebellious inclinations ? And must not the Gospel which proclaims it tend to promote immorality and looseness of life ?

The question thus put is both a fair and an important one. It proceeds on two principles of admitted justice : the first, that it is of paramount importance that man, as redeemed, should be reduced to a condition of moral rectitude and obedience ; and the second, that, as it is always difficult to show kindness to the unworthy with wisdom, it is especially so in this case, in which the kindness is most profuse, and the unworthiness most aggravated.

In this respect, however, we are instructed that God has not been wanting to himself. According to the declaration of the apostle, he has, in redemption, “abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence ;” and an examination of the method of his mercy will demonstrate to us the care which he has taken to make every manifestation of his grace conducive to the renovation of our character.

The moral mischief to be apprehended from the overflowing grace of redemption is twofold. It may be supposed to operate injuriously on the head, or on the heart ; to supply a justification of sin to the understanding, or to nourish its power over the affections. Let us examine successively these two aspects of the case.

I. In the first place, we have to trace the influence of the grace of God on the understanding of its recipient. We ask this question—Does the grace of redemption supply a justification for sin ?

An apparent and plausible ground for giving an affirmative answer to this question, arises from the great evangelical fact that Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf, so that, as believers in him, we “are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans vi. 14).

I cannot for a moment think of qualifying this broad statement of evangelical truth and privilege, in order to avoid the difficulty to which it seems to lead. I suggest, rather, that here is an undefined and entangling use made of the phrase being "under the law," by a careful examination of which our way will become clear.

1. What is it, then, to be "under the law"? It may be one of three things.

First, to be "under the law" may be to be under the curse of the law as transgressors of it. This by sin we were, but now are not if we be believers in Jesus, he having been made a curse for us.

Secondly, to be "under the law" may be to be under the dominion of the law as the instrument of God's moral government, so that we have to seek acceptance with God on its declared principle of perfect obedience. This we once were, but are not now if we be believers in Jesus, his fulfilment of the law for us having provided for us a righteousness available for our justification by faith.

Thirdly, to be "under the law" may be to be under the obligation of the law as a standard and rule of righteousness. In this respect the obligation of the law is universal, eternal, and unchangeable; and in this respect, therefore, even believers in Christ are under it, as well as others. So, indeed, the apostle explicitly states in 1 Corinthians ix. 21, where he says of himself, that he is "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." For us, as believers in Jesus, there is no reduced or lowered standard of righteousness, no other than the moral law in all its perfection; and on us, as rational beings, lies the unalterable obligation of conforming ourselves to it. Through grace, the law is not to us the *condition* of life, but it must for ever be the *rule* of life.

2. Nothing that Christ has done tends to supersede or to relax this obligation. In laying the foundation of our redemption by his substitutionary sacrifice in his obedience unto death, he fulfilled every claim of the law against us, so that he sets us no example of infringing on its requirements. Nor did his work, in thus fulfilling the law for us, extend further than to lay the basis of our justification by his righteousness. It was never intended to constitute, so to speak, a substitutionary holiness for the whole of the Christian life.

3. That this is the real state of the case is evident from this, that the precepts of the moral law were taken up both by Christ and his apostles, and enforced in all their amplitude. Thus speaks one apostle: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter i. 15, 16). And thus speaks another: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans vi. 12, 13). Of such extent and variety is the preceptive language of Scripture, that to cite it all would be to quote a large part of the New Testament.

4. It is a further argument in the same direction, that the work wrought by God in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus entirely accords with the view we have given. The work of the Holy Spirit is, undoubtedly, a renovating and sanctifying work. And the apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, quotes from the Old Testament a passage strikingly descriptive of the state of things under the new covenant: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews viii. 10).

5. God's practical dealings, also, with his people proceed upon the same system. It is true that he makes their position of privilege inviolably secure, and that he will not, by any amount of iniquity, be provoked to send a child of his to perdition; it would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that he will suffer his children to sin with impunity. There are among men punishments corrective as well as destructive, paternal as well as magisterial. The chastisements of a father are by no means to be despised, and to a filial spirit they are even more effectual than the inflictions of a magistrate. And so it is with God. As a ruler he has judgments for his enemies, and as a father he has corrections for his children. It is written in the Psalms:—

"If his children forsake my law,
And walk not in my judgments,
If they break my statutes,

And keep not my commandments,
 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,
 And their iniquity with stripes:
 Nevertheless my lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him,
 Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

Psalm lxxxix. 30-33.

6. Nor is God's discipline to be regarded as less capable of giving pain than his vengeance; for it strikes a heart which is essentially tender, and which love pierces more deeply than wrath. Some of his dearest children have, under it, complained aloud of a wounded spirit, and of broken bones; and in many ways short of perdition can God make those to learn their folly and mistake, who flatter themselves that, because they are children, they may sin without, at least, severe suffering.

7. Neither can it be said that, even in the promptness and fulness of divine forgiveness, there is anything to show that God thinks lightly of sin, or will deal with it lightly. The contrary is the fact. His very method of forgiveness shows how intensely he hates iniquity. Look at redemption for a moment in this aspect.

Unholy as we are, God nevertheless admits us into his presence with favour; but it is by a method of mediation. There is one placed between us and God in order that we may come nigh, and, if it were not for that expedient, we never could have come nigh. Not all the pity in the heart of God—and that, as we may judge alike from his mercy and its fruits, is not a little—would ever have induced him to allow our direct approach to him; so jealous is he of his holiness, and so intense is his abhorrence of iniquity. Nor was it a mediator of slender dignity that could procure our acceptable introduction. Neither man nor seraph could have effectually occupied that position, but God's own Son alone, he, for the purpose, combining our nature with his own. And all this contrivance is the strict measure of God's hatred of iniquity, and jealousy for his holiness. Even now, in the full possession of our privilege, it is only through Jesus that we draw nigh to that infinitely pure presence, which otherwise would be to us as "a consuming fire."

Or take another view of the case. Rebellious as we have been against the government of God, he has justified us freely by his grace, so that there is now no condemnation to us; but this has been done by a process of expiatory sacrifice.

To lay the basis of our state of peace, a substitute was provided to stand in our room, in our stead to obey and suffer—to render, indeed, a perfect obedience, and to endure the full penalty of our crimes. To provide the qualifications necessary in such a substitute—the kindred, the innocence, the dignity, all of them requisite to give the sacrifice propriety, adaptation, and worth—demanded the manifestation in human flesh of the Son of God, in deep humiliation and agonizing sorrow. Such was the victim slain for us; and, when he stood in our stead, the Father spared him not. So much God hated sin, and so inexorable was the necessity that, under his righteous government, it should be visited with condign punishment. But for the substitution of such a victim, but for so marvellous an act of expiation, the just wrath of God could never have been removed from us, but must have been poured out in floods of endless sorrow.

A third view may be taken of the same subject. By faith in Christ we are not only justified, but taken into a state of grace unspeakable. Accepted in the beloved, we are made to share in the divine love of which he is the object; like him a son, and, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. We are emphatically warned, however, that this is not for our own sake, but for the sake of another, even Jesus, who gave himself for us. It is the infinite love which God bears to his first-born Son which overflows to all the other members of the family, and blesses them in order to reward and glorify him. We may apply to this matter the words appended to the promises of mercy made to the ancient Israel—"Not for your own sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel" (Ezek. xxxvi. 32).

It is indisputably manifest from these considerations, that, in combination with the boundless riches of his grace, God has both cherished, and expressed, a most intense hatred of sin. In releasing a sinner from condemnation and wrath, he would relax nothing of the punishment which sin deserved; and, in the training of those whom he receives as his children, he employs a discipline at once adapted and effectual for its purpose. It surely must be a total fallacy to draw from such premises the conclusion that God thinks lightly of sin, or will suffer its commission with impunity. Assuredly, if there had been any one whom he would have spared, it

would have been his own Son, whom he loved with an infinite tenderness; yet he said, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow" (Zech. xiii. 7). And shall the rod slumber, O perverse child, when he has to chasten **THEE**?

8. To these considerations it may be added, that holiness is scripturally an essential mark of a true Christian. Faith, an apostle tells us, purifies the heart, and, consequently, the life. If, therefore, we find a professed believer in Jesus who wishes to live in sin, we infer that his profession is false, and that he is either deceiver, or deceived. A child of God, you tell me, cannot perish. True, dear hearer; but, as it is not clear that you are one, God may take all his children to heaven, and yet doom *you* to perdition. In truth, your living in sin, and even your cherished wish to live in it, marks you out as of the children of the wicked one; were you one of God's own, you would not sin, even if you might. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans vi. 16.) "By their fruits," said our Lord, "ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew vii. 20-23).

II. But let us now advance to the second part of our subject. We have seen how it is with the head, let us now see how it is with the heart. If the grace of redemption does not supply any grounds for thinking lightly of sin, does it leave the love of sin prevalent over the affections?

To this question we unhesitatingly answer, No. And to demonstrate this it will be sufficient to direct your attention to two points: first, to the condition on which an interest in redemption is acquired; and, secondly, to the motives which are brought into bearing on those who possess it.

1. Allow me to direct your attention, in the first place, to the condition on which an interest in redemption is acquired.

This is simply set forth by the apostle in words which have already been under our consideration: "Testifying

repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." So are sinners to be saved. It is undoubtedly true, that this method of salvation is the easiest and most gracious which could possibly have been prescribed. It is without suffering, without labour, without merit, without prayer, without even tears; it is not, however, *without principle*, and it will be found on examination to contain the germ of an entirely new character. Indeed, while, in one view, this method of salvation is the most easy which can be conceived, in another it is the most difficult. It involves the exercise of total and absolute self-renunciation, which, to a proud and self-complacent spirit, is the hardest of all things. The condition proposed is a critical test of the state of the heart, and the acceptance of it implies an entire internal change. For man's heart is full of self-complacency; pride is its ruling passion; and it deeply touches the pride of man's heart to be required to approach God through a mediator, or to accept mercy through a substituted victim. It is on this ground that the Gospel, infinitely rich as its grace is, is by many rejected; and, whenever the condition required is submitted to, it demonstrates the occurrence of an entire change.

In a word, the acceptance of the condition of redemption indicates the great change expressed by the phrase, reconciliation to God; the enemy has become a friend. Now, reconciliation to God is the germinating element of a new character, the seed of all holiness. All that man was in the time of his disobedience was the fruit of his enmity to God; and from his friendship there must necessarily grow fruits of a diametrically opposite kind. In this change, in truth, the whole man is changed, practically and universally changed. Live as he did before he *cannot*, since the vital power of his life of sin—his enmity to God—is destroyed; and live in a manner contrary to his former course he *must*, since this is the only direction in which the new power of his life can impel him.

It is evident that Christianity thus makes a provision for the holiness of the redeemed of an effective and most remarkable kind. It attacks sin; it attacks no sin in detail, however, but all in the root. Man naturally and necessarily does what he loves; and to secure his doing what is holy, God, at one touch, makes him love holiness. The generation

of this ruling power is involved in compliance with the very condition of redemption—in submission to the righteousness of God.

2. After thus finding the germ of holiness in the condition on which an interest in redemption is acquired, let us notice the motives which are brought into bearing on those who possess it.

These motives are not altogether different from those by which obedience to the law of God was originally enforced, since the obligation of the law as a rule of life still remains unbroken; old motives, however, now come with new power, and the heart, now changed from enmity to friendship, shows a new sensibility to them. The sinner reconciled to God views his law with an approbation and reverence which he never before felt; its counterpart is written in his heart, and it has become to him the glorious standard of rectitude to which he longs to be conformed. Besides, he sees with admiring awe the unparalleled honours which the law has received in the cross of Christ, and he cannot but learn to revere what his Redeemer has so wonderfully magnified. Can he lightly disobey a law which the Saviour so amply, and so painfully, fulfilled?

It is not in the changed state of the sinner's mind towards the law, however, that the great moving power of redemption resides. In this work God appeals mainly to love, a passion now for the first time awakened, and by many considerations brought into energetic action.

On the one hand, the grace of redemption generates love to God. No longer the mere ruler, however righteous, he appears in the touching exercise of compassion. He has "so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And so, "because he first loved us," we come to love him; and love makes easy work of that which, as pure matter of obligation, had been, at least, less delightful.

Still more emphatically, on the other hand, redemption awakens love to Christ. His interposition on behalf of sinners against God is characterized by love altogether without a parallel. With every reason which an infinitely holy nature, and a profound sympathy with the honour of his offended Father, could supply, for viewing transgressors with unmitigated displeasure, he nevertheless pitied them, and

this so tenderly as to enter at once into his Father's scheme of redemption, not shrinking even from the deepest humiliation, and the severest suffering, in order to carry it into effect. How low he stooped, when he left his throne of glory and of light to take on himself "the seed of Abraham," and to bow his head to death, neither tongue can tell, nor heart conceive; but this is unquestionable, that, by this deed of boundless compassion, he has placed us under an obligation of gratitude which never can be fully discharged. Him that loved us so well assuredly we ought to love with all our powers; and when we taste his grace we *do* love him, although not as we should.

Love to Christ is undoubtedly a part of the experience of every Christian, and is at once characteristic and essential. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ," says the apostle, "let him be anathema maranatha" (1 Cor. xvi. 22); he has no part nor lot in the matter. In the bosom of a Christian, indeed, love to Christ becomes at once the absorbing and the ruling passion. It takes absolute precedence of every other affection, and assimilates every feeling to its own nature. "The love of Christ constraineth us," said Paul; "because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).

Now, love is the mightiest of the passions, and is undoubtedly the ruling power even of the most energetic characters. That which engages it commands all the man, and exerts a controlling influence at once paramount and secure. And of this power God has taken hold.

It thus appears, we think, that, in redemption, God has acted in such a manner as to render "the exceeding riches of his grace" conducive to practical holiness; and that for the interest of moral purity his method has been as "prudent," as for ruined humanity it has been kind.

Before concluding the subject, however, I may venture to throw out a general challenge, and to ask what method could have been more influential? If salvation by free grace, and justification by faith only, have a tendency to foster immorality and antinomianism, what system would have cherished an elevated purity? or what method could have been more influential? If any, let it be assigned. Would it have been

more conducive to the interest of good morals, if God had required man to suffer for his own iniquities? or called on him to work out his own righteousness? or charged him to maintain his own standing in the divine favour?

To say nothing at present of the impossibility of salvation in any such methods, it may safely be asserted that none of them would be productive of any practical advantage to the cause of holiness, but would bring into operation a much feebler influence.

It may be admitted, indeed, that, in suffering for his own iniquity, man might learn something of the evil of sin; but the same lesson is much more powerfully taught by contemplating the sufferings of the Son of God. The inflexibility of God's justice might be demonstrated to us by the infliction of his wrath upon ourselves, but it is made much more manifest by the sacrifice of an innocent and glorious substitute. The sending of a whole world to perdition would constitute no such demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the outpouring of his vengeance on the head of Jesus.

And as to comparative power of motive. We may admit the force of self-interest. It is a great moving power in a fallen world, and it does wonders; but it is far from being either the only, or the most influential, human motive. Love, in every form in which it yet survives in our degenerate race, has far more efficacy, as a thousand forms of familiar experience demonstrate. What advantage, then, could we gain—nay, what should we not lose—by discarding love from religion, and making it predominantly a matter of selfishness? The new doctrine would be—"Practise good morals, because by them you are to acquire and maintain a standing in the favour of God." In other words, it is your interest to do so—your highest and most important interest, undoubtedly; but still interest is the whole idea. This would, unquestionably, be a great miscalculation of the power of motive, and a total mistake as a scheme for the renovation of character. Interest, as a motive, is powerless if it acts in opposition to love, and, if it acts in the same direction, it is comparatively feeble. Love is the ruling passion, and he who can take hold of it may safely call himself lord. It is in this respect that, in redemption, there is manifested a wisdom most profound. It is as though its Author's grand maxim had been, "Let me win the sinner's heart, and he will become everything that I wish him to be."

In conclusion, then, we justify God. In redemption he has shown as much prudence as grace. Herein "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians i. 25).

I have thus endeavoured to show how the renovation of human character is provided for by the work of redemption, under the idea that its first aim is the deliverance of the sinner from wrath, and the cultivation of holiness the second; but, before concluding this subject, some attention may be due to the system of those who hold that the object of God in redemption is to deliver men, not from punishment, but from sin, directly and exclusively, as the only real element of their misery. I do honour to the generosity and nobleness in which this sentiment is evidently rooted, and admire it as an endeavour to eliminate selfishness from piety; but I cannot think it either just in itself, or satisfactory in its intended bearing. Not now to insist that the scriptural declarations of divine wrath against sinners are too express to be ignored, I must express my conviction, that the dominion of sin—which is the point now before us—is too firmly established to be thus overthrown.

For let the question be fairly asked, By what means, according to this system, is man's deliverance from sin to be effected? The only answer is, By the example of self-sacrifice which Christ has set us. Now, I would not willingly allow that any person can feel a more profound reverence for the self-sacrifice of Christ than I myself cherish. It is undoubtedly without a parallel, sublime and beautiful beyond all power of expression, or conception. But two considerations require here to be noted.

The first is, that the work of Christ cannot be with truth represented as an act of self-sacrifice, or as one, at least, in any way worthy of imitation, unless it was accomplished for a grand and commensurate object. Without such an object, his sufferings must be regarded (as I have elsewhere observed) as a mere piece of either whimsical or romantic extravagance, adapted to operate rather as a warning than as an example. Yet this is the attitude in which the work of Christ is thus set before us. He denies himself solely to exhibit an example of self-denial; an end not worthy of the deed.

The second observation to be made is, that the influence thus evoked is too feeble for its purpose. For in what

manner is the self-sacrifice of Christ to deliver men from the love of sin? By its power, we are told, as an example. Now I do not deny the force of example, which is proverbially more influential than precept; but there is no warrant, I think, for ascribing to it so extraordinary a power as this. An example of pre-eminent self-sacrifice exhibited to a heart predominantly and deeply selfish, is scarcely likely to be understood, not at all likely to be appreciated, and sure not to be imitated. It will naturally be smiled at, and passed by, as a piece of romantic folly.

Viewed as a great act of expiation, however, the voluntary humiliation of Christ assumes an entirely different aspect. If "the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him," if "his soul was made an offering for sin," and if for this cause "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," then his humiliation is not merely an example; it is a grand transaction of love from which we derive the most substantial benefits. Hereby Jesus has "delivered us from the wrath to come," and wrought for us a redemption of surpassing value. Now his act of self-sacrifice assumes in our eyes a most touching character, and his deed is charged with a heart-stirring eloquence to us. Now there is power in his agonies. They kindle gratitude, and awaken love. They make sin hateful, and engage the whole heart in conformity to him who died for us. Then, and not till then, will his example be operative.

I lay it down as a principle, therefore, that, in order to render the sufferings of Christ influential as a persuasive against sin, it is indispensable to regard them as endured to obtain deliverance from wrath.

Finally, the practical lesson yielded by our subject is, let us do justice to the Gospel. Redemption is, indeed, a scheme for making us safe and happy; but not only so, it is a scheme for making us holy too. As it had been a folly on God's part to have expended the exceeding riches of his grace on a process which would have left us impure, and as he has in this respect "abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence," so it will be a folly on our part to suppose that we can separate the privileges of redemption from its purity. The faith which justifies also sanctifies. True, it justifies first, and sanctifies afterwards; but it so certainly sanctifies that, if it does not sanctify, it does not justify—the absence of

sanctification disproves the reality of our faith. No man believes in Christ who does not love him, and no man who loves Christ can live in sin.

Beloved brethren, will our lives bear the application of this test? By profession we are believers in Jesus; are we also men of godliness? Have old things passed away, and all things become new? Do we live under new principles, for new ends, and in new methods; denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present evil world? This is the ultimate lesson which "the grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth," and only by a practical exemplification of it can we "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." O professors of the name of Jesus! be men of holy life. Remember that "the foundation of God," which standeth so sure, hath "this seal, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy ii. 19).

LECTURE X.

THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF REDEMPTION.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."—*Phil.* i. 6.

WE have at length arrived at a more complex and comprehensive view of redemption than that with which we set out. In the first instance we contemplated it as a scheme for delivering mankind from the consequences of transgression, those consequences to be found in the displeasure of a holy God, and the curse of a broken law; but we have found that, in the end, it is a method, also, for subduing the dominion of sin, and renovating the character of man. Its result is represented on the one hand by justification, and acceptance with God; and on the other by sanctification, and renewal in the image of his holiness.

Looking at redemption in this comprehensive light, and as practically wrought out in the condition and character of

man, it is evidently a work of which much yet remains to be achieved. Neither the change in our condition, nor the change in our character, is as yet by any means complete. According to the language of the apostle, "the day of Jesus Christ" is to be looked forward to, as the period at which the last great triumphs of divine mercy towards us shall be wrought, and the future happiness of the saints be consummated. In anticipation of this day a solemn obligation lies upon ourselves. It is not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect; but we have to follow after, that we may also apprehend that for which we have been apprehended of God in Christ Jesus. The consummation is to be arrived at by a course of persevering effort; and not only so, but by a course of persevering effort successfully maintained in the face of many difficulties. For a time we tarry on earth, where full play is given to the remaining corruption of our nature, where the world presents to us innumerable temptations, and where a wily adversary finds many avenues for assault; yet here is our faith to be maintained, our holiness to be cultivated, and a course of devotedness to be carried out which is to lead to future reward. It is a deeply interesting and important question, therefore, How is this to be done? And is there any security that it shall be done effectually, or that it shall be done at all?

If, in relation to this question, we look at Christians themselves, there is certainly much that ought to be encouraging. A Christian surely cannot have learnt in vain the lessons which experience has taught him, or willingly go back again to the wretchedness and servitude from which he has escaped. Can it be supposed that he will now abandon his dearest interests, or prove recreant to his weightiest obligations; that the love of a dying Saviour will cease to kindle his gratitude, or the glory before him to animate his hope?

Alas! all this, not only can be supposed, but is actually to be apprehended. Out of man's inconstant and treacherous heart such a result would too surely arise. It is not that anything is involved in the maintenance of a Christian life that is beyond our power; it is the heart which is here at fault, and it is assuredly far too treacherous to be trusted. It is a confession deeply humiliating, but at once required by the consciousness of every Christian, and confirmed by lamentable experience.

What, then, is to be our conclusion? Does faith in Jesus bring us within view of a state of blessedness which we may never attain? And is the prospect of arriving at it to be clouded with constant doubts, and our way towards it harassed with interminable fears?

By no means. The glory to be revealed is rather to be anticipated with lively and indestructible joy; but this is to be reached by turning away from ourselves, to another and a better strength. There is one who can perform the work until "the day of Jesus Christ" shall perfect it for ever, though we cannot; and that he will do so may be inferred with confidence from this, that it is he who has begun it. So speaks the apostle in our text: "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Our subject presents itself to us in two forms: a fact, and an inference. A fact—God "hath begun a good work" in us; an inference—he will therefore "perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

I. Let us notice, in the first place, the fact. This exhibits itself in two parts: the first, that, if we are Christians indeed, a good work is begun in us; the second, that of this good work God is the author.

First, if we are Christians indeed, a good work is begun in us.

Yes; religion is something "*in us*." It is not a name, a form, a ceremony, or a group or succession of ceremonies. Not a thousand external things can constitute it. Religion is something within us; it belongs to the heart, and has its seat there. Alas! what multitudes possess "the form of godliness," while "denying the power."

It is also "a work" in us. It is of a powerful and practical kind. It wakes up the deepest feelings, and sets the whole man in motion. New hopes and fears, new joys and sorrows, come mightily into being, and mould the whole conduct and character afresh. It is like a new creation, in which old things pass away, and all things become new.

And further, religion is "a good work" in us. Changes of character may be for the worse, and sometimes are so; but religion is a change greatly for the better. It is turning "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." The light which beams on the soul is light from

heaven, and it exhibits in their beauty all holy things ; the new impulses generated are impulses towards God and righteousness, and the life now entered on is one of grateful dedication to God and his glory. That the work is "a good work" is known by its fruits ; for it produces "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God."

Say, dear hearer, is it thus with you? Has a good work been begun in you? Has your inmost soul been awakened to spiritual things? Has your proud heart been humbled? Has your carnal taste been changed? Has your all been dedicated to Christ? Have you entered into fellowship with God? And have you gained a victory over the world? Such is the "good work" which, if you be a Christian indeed, has been begun in you.

Secondly, let us now ask, of this good work who is the author?

Can it be attributed to man? So some have thought; and have believed, or professed to believe, that sin is so much matter of accident, or temptation, or example, that in favourable circumstances man would of himself repent, and turn to God. But it is not so that we read, either the facts of human life, or the declarations of the written Word. Both of these testify, with united and irresistible power, to the deep and universal depravity of man, the thoughts of whose heart, from ancient times until now, have been "only evil, and that continually." "The carnal mind," says the apostle, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans viii. 7). How, with such a dominant feeling, could "a good work" originate there?

Will the credit of it be taken by any Christian? Say, Christian, is this what you were by nature? or what you have become by your own will? Ah! how well you know the contrary. You remember well your long indifference, and deep aversion, to it. You not only took no active measures towards it of your own accord, but you struggled against the power that grasped you, and often strove to repel the influence which finally subdued you. No; the "good work" was not begun by you.

Can it, then, be assigned to any instrumental cause?

It is well known that there is an instrumental cause to

which regeneration is extensively assigned, namely, baptism; and much is said of the grace supposed to be conferred in baptism, as constituting a germ of piety in itself, and an element of divine influence to be subsequently cultivated by us.

I cannot hesitate frankly to express my belief, that the notion of baptismal regeneration and grace is a pure fiction, growing, not altogether unnaturally, out of the unscriptural practice of baptizing infants. I say not altogether unnaturally; for, infants being baptized, it seems reasonable to think that some benefit should result to them from the ordinance, and regeneration may as well be imagined as any other.

While speaking thus, I am, of course, not forgetting the scriptural references customarily made in support of this notion. I know that our Lord said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5); but I never could see any success attending the efforts made to connect this passage with baptism, which certainly has no place, either in the context, or in the connexion. I know, also, that Paul, in his epistle to Titus, uses the phrase "the washing of regeneration," which is held by many to be an assertion of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; but here, again, I do not think that the passage, read as a whole, either suggests, or allows, any reference to baptism (see Titus iii. 4-7). To say that the phrases *must* refer to baptism, is simply begging the question; since there is clearly another meaning of which both of them are susceptible. The purifying effect of water supplies a natural illustration of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; and for this purpose, I conceive, it is scripturally employed.

If, however, baptism were really productive of any spiritual change, this result ought in all reason to be indicated by some characteristic evidence. If a man has become in reality a new creature, old things ought, in some discernible measure at least, to have passed away. The case before us, however, will not bear the application of any practical test. Were there any visible difference between the baptized and the unbaptized, something might, perhaps, be said for the alleged influence of baptism; no such difference, however, of any kind or degree, appears. On the contrary, according to all

observation and experience, baptismal grace is an absolute nullity. Character is wrought on by a thousand influences, and formed into a thousand diversities, but among these influences the presence or the absence of baptism holds no discernible place. Could this be, if it were really the spring of a transforming spiritual power?

While thus securing no benefit to the baptized, the notion of baptismal grace has a dark and forbidding aspect towards the unbaptized. If baptism be the divinely-appointed instrument of regeneration, it would naturally seem to be universally so; and hence it would inevitably follow, that the unbaptized, being unregenerate, must be lost. The conclusion sounds harsh, cruel, and even horrible—so horrible, that there are few who do not shrink from its direct enunciation; it is, however, inevitably involved in the premises. If it be still true that the unbaptized are to have the Gospel preached to them, that it is their duty and privilege to believe in Jesus, and that, believing, they shall be saved, the peculiar benefit of baptism is reduced to a small amount indeed; and, if it be not, when it is considered at how late a period of the world the ordinance of baptism was introduced, and to how small a number of persons, as compared with the entire population of the world, it was in the first ages of Christianity, and is even yet, administered, the notion of baptismal regeneration must be regarded as placing a restriction on the grace of the Gospel too awful for belief.

After all, however, another objection lies against this conception—namely, that it ultimately refers to man the work of his own salvation. For baptismal grace, it is held, is given that it may be improved; and it may be either improved or lost, either cultivated or forfeited. Baptismal grace, then, is not an influence which does its work effectually, but one which depends for its saving result on man's own will. And hence, accordingly, many who have received it are supposed to lose it by neglect, and ultimately to perish. Where is the use, it may be asked, of an element of divine grace thus liable to be frustrated by human corruption? Or what hope can there be of a successful issue, when the ultimate decision is thus placed in the hands of an enemy and a traitor?

Since, then, the credit of beginning the good work neither can be claimed by man, nor assigned to any instrumental

cause, it is of necessity to be ascribed to God, the only other source to which it can be referred. It is doubtless the work of his Holy Spirit by his blessed and almighty influence on the heart, and to him be all the glory of it. God, indeed, takes the glory to himself. "It is written in the prophets," said our Lord, "And they shall be all taught of God; every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John vi. 45). Unquestionably, the converse of this is true: "He that cometh unto me hath heard and learned of the Father." The apostle also declares the same truth, when he says to the Philippians, "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13). Yes, the good work is God's. It is too good to originate from any other source, and we gratefully give him humble praise.

II. God "hath begun a good work" in us. Such is the fact; let us, in the second place, consider the inference which the apostle draws from it: "He who hath begun the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The apostle shows no hesitation in arriving at this conclusion. I am "confident," says he, "of this very thing;" of this one thing at least, whatever else may be doubtful. Let us notice the grounds on which a similar confidence may be arrived at by ourselves.

1. The conclusion before us may be drawn from a general view of the character of God.

It is not his wont to leave any of his works unfinished. Why should he do so? All his plans are formed in profound wisdom, and carried out by almighty power. How should he do so? All his purposes are, like himself, eternal and unchangeable. In what case has he done so? Are not all his works, so far as they are open to our observation, of finished completeness, and of perfect beauty? And he who leaves nothing unfinished, how should he leave unfinished the work of redemption? What an inexplicable anomaly would an abandoned or a mutilated production be, amidst the universe of God!

2. But, if this conclusion may be drawn from a general view of the character of God, it may be drawn with still greater confidence from the particular nature of the work of redemption.

The work of redemption is in itself of peculiar excellency.

In its nature, relations, and issues, it stands not only pre-eminent, but supreme, among all the works of its divine Author. It is a department, not of his physical creation, but of his moral administration; and it is the department of it which (humanly speaking) involved the greatest difficulties, and has brought out the most wonderful display of his resources. It engaged his deepest counsels; it evoked the most elaborate machinery; it entailed the largest cost; it contemplates the most illustrious issues. It may well be set down as that work upon which God's heart is most set, and which, with more certainty than any other, therefore, shall receive its full accomplishment. If any operation of the Deity stand amidst the universe unfinished, let it be some star, some sun, some world of physical beauty; but it shall not assuredly be the work of redemption. "He that has begun the good work will perform it."

The work of redemption fully provides for its own completion by the conditions on which it proceeds. I have said that (humanly speaking) the work of redemption involves more difficulties than any other work of God. By it he has to rescue from the brink of merited perdition, and to bring, "through much tribulation," to eternal glory, a multitude of most guilty, helpless, and perverse creatures, putting his love, patience, and power, to unmeasurable trial. In the contemplation of it we may well say, Who but himself could accomplish such a deed? By him, however, all can be done; not by a mere exertion of power, but by the exercise of profound wisdom. The basis of the operation is Christ—Christ "the wisdom of God, and the power of God." By his mediation and sacrifice every claim of divine holiness and righteousness is satisfied; while, by his voluntary humiliation and faithful service, he establishes a title to large recompense and reward. Exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, he can effect the whole work, and the whole is intrusted to his hands. The chosen of the Father's love are given to the Son. "Thine they were," says Christ, "and thou gavest them me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John xvii. 6; x. 28). And he will be able to say at the last, when he shall present the redeemed faultless, with exceeding joy, before the Father's face, "Of them which thou gavest me I have lost none" (John xviii. 9).

The work of redemption was undertaken under covenant obligations. It involves an engagement with another to which God has solemnly made himself a party, and to which he cannot—must not—be unfaithful. In this respect it may be said to be the most sacredly binding of all God's works. It is the only case in which he has bound himself to another, and the result will afford a critical illustration of his character. In a work which was absolutely his own, he might be conceived to use his own pleasure; but this work he is not free to abandon. It must be finished, for it involves the recompense of his Son, and this must not be lost. It was in reliance upon this "covenant of peace" that the Lord Jesus went through his course of unparalleled humiliation and sorrow; and the whole creation would stand in amazement if he were to be disappointed of the joy set before him.

The completion of the work of redemption becomes to the Christian more sure as it advances. Every step in its progress overcomes some of its difficulties, and leaves fewer to be encountered. Every manifestation of divine mercy affords a fresh demonstration of its unchangeableness, and a new pledge of its fidelity. At every successive stage of his journey the believer is enabled gratefully to say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me;" and, with so cheering a retrospect, the prospect grows continually brighter and brighter. He feels warranted to indulge the feelings thus sweetly expressed in song—

"And can he have taught me to trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

Assuredly, the apostle was running into no extravagance when he expressed his confidence that he who had begun the good work would perform it until the day of Christ. Nor need we fear to cherish a similar conviction. As presented to our eyes, indeed, "the ransomed of the Lord" may exhibit an aspect of much unworthiness, of great weakness, of many trials, and of constant peril; but they shall nevertheless "come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy." And we may hear the Redeemer still addressing to them the words which once fell from his lips, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

Such is our view of the general subject which has been before us. The efficient cause of redemption is God. He is the author of the good work which has been begun in every true Christian, and he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. In the treatment of the subject generally there is no difficulty, and about the conclusion arrived at there can be no question. It yet remains, however, to bring home to the individual, as true to him, what is undoubtedly true as to the group; and this is a matter requiring serious circumspection. The question we have to take up is this: In what manner, and on what ground, may the general doctrine of the final security of the saints be personally applied?

To this important question the answer is neither difficult, nor indistinct. Of course, it cannot be on the ground of a mere profession, which in many cases notoriously is, and, to human judgment, in any case may be, a mere cloak and disguise for hypocrisy and worldliness. Nor can it be on the ground of a strong persuasion, or of an impression, however vivid, that we are children of God; a persuasion which may, indeed, be just, and which, if substantiated by characteristic evidence, may be believed to be just, but which has been too often found apart from such evidence, and in alliance with merely enthusiastic excitements, to be of itself trustworthy. What is requisite is scriptural evidence of experimental piety. The general truth is, that where a good work is begun it will be finished; and the proper personal inquiry is, Is a good work begun in me? As convinced of sin, have I been led to take the place before God of a rebel deserving condemnation? As exhausted of self-righteous hope, have I counted all things but loss that I may win Christ? As crucified with Christ, am I also crucified to the world; and have I crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts? As born of God, have I the character and spirit of a child, and do I cry, Abba, Father? A conscientious answer to these and similar questions, will bring out at least a probable, if not an absolutely certain, result; and if, on a serious and faithful examination, we feel warranted to answer them in the affirmative, there is no reason why we should scruple to take the consolation to which such an answer leads. We trust that a good work has been begun in us; let us thank God for it, who is its author, and rejoice in the assurance that he will be its finisher too. This conclusion is one of sound

reason and common sense, as well as scriptural warranty. Nothing more than scriptural evidence of experimental piety is necessary to its solidity; no high feeling of assurance, no elevated attainments in religion, no freedom from doubts and fears. Is the good work begun? Ask no more; if it be, it will be finished.

Is a believer, then, it may be asked, arriving at such a conclusion, to be henceforward released from the necessity of a careful and holy walk? May he say, "I am safe now; and nothing can endanger me"? Assuredly not. It is in the cultivation of a holy life that our salvation is wrought out; it is by walking humbly with God that we are to reach our heavenly home. And here is the continuous evidence of our piety, which, indeed, is necessary to the continuous warranty of our hope. For it is not that we have become acquainted with any divine secret, or have seen that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life; we have judged by evidence merely, and our judgment can be firm only so long as the evidence is supplied on which it rests. Let the evidence disappear and the judgment lapses, leaving us to infer that we were mistaken, and that the fact is not as we supposed. It is of the nature of true piety to be persevering, and no evidence of its existence can be satisfactory which is not durable. Thus, as it is necessary to the completion of the good work that it should be begun, so it is necessary to our assurance of its completion that it should continue, for by this only can we know that it has been begun.

These thoughts supply us with a simple rule for our particular guidance. Let us see that we possess scriptural evidences of piety, and let us maintain an humble walk with God, and we may cherish an habitual and cheerful hope—why should we fear to say a joyful assurance?—of a safe and happy issue. Our path may be one of trial and of difficulty, of weakness and of sorrow; but we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us." For we know, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans viii. 38, 39).

LECTURE XI.

THE FINAL CAUSE OF REDEMPTION.

“To the praise of his glory.”—*Ephesians* i. 12.

WE have now taken a somewhat extended survey of the work of human redemption. We have contemplated its proximate cause, or its immediate occasion, in the sin and ruin of mankind; and we have considered its procuring cause, or those arrangements of divine wisdom on which the basis of it was laid, by the twofold operation of mediation and expiation. We have adverted, also, to the two great aspects of redemption: on the one hand, its universality, or its general provision for the salvation of the race; and on the other hand, its particularity, or its specific adaptation to the salvation of the individual. We have dwelt, likewise, both on the instrumental cause and the practical method of redemption; the former presenting, in “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” the condition on which a personal interest in it is suspended; and the latter, in “the ministry of reconciliation,” the manner in which the appeal of God’s mercy is made to the heart of the transgressor. We have further considered the blessedness of redemption, or the happiness which it confers, and the moral adaptation of it, or the force which it directs towards the renovation and sanctification of our nature; while our last Lecture was devoted to the examination of its efficient cause, or the power by which it is wrought in the heart, and by which its ultimate completion is guaranteed. In this, the concluding discourse of the series, I shall direct your attention to the final cause of redemption, or to the end which God has in view in it.

The inquiry on which we thus reverently enter is assuredly one of much interest and importance. No wise agent employs himself without having an end in view, and according to the excellency of the end contemplated will our estimate naturally, and justly, be of the work undertaken. Least of all are the works of God undertaken without an end, and of all his works this, the greatest of all, has assuredly the noblest end. After so long a contemplation of

it in its various aspects, we cannot turn our eyes from it without reverently asking, What, by all this labour, did God really mean to do?

In pursuing this inquiry, let us endeavour, in the first place, to arrive at a clear idea of the end actually in view; and then, in the second place, to trace the manner in which, and the extent to which, the end has been attained.

I. We endeavour, in the first place, to arrive at a clear idea of the end actually contemplated in redemption.

1. In this endeavour we must not be too easily led by objects which lie on the surface, and are immediately apparent.

It might seem, for example, as though the question for what end God undertook the work of human redemption was answered as soon as proposed, and did not admit of extended inquiry. Was it not, it may be asked, the happiness of mankind? Was not the occasion of it their ruin and misery, and their deliverance and blessedness the object for which it was provided? All this is true; and yet, if we say that the happiness of mankind was the object of the work of redemption, we shall immediately find ourselves in a difficulty, unless we are prepared to maintain that all are actually saved. I am aware that there are theologians who take this ground; but, as argument would be here out of place, I shall content myself with saying that I do not so read my Bible: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). With the admitted facts before us, that the blessedness of redemption is presented to mankind in such a manner as, on the one hand, to invite to its possession, and, on the other, to allow of its loss, and even of its refusal; and that, in reality, many do refuse it, and perish miserably in their unbelief; we certainly cannot maintain that the happiness of mankind was the end of the work itself. It is clearly not the end effected, and, consequently, not the end designed. An aspect of defeat and disappointment cannot belong to any of the works of God.

It is declared in the Scripture, that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8); but a similar difficulty attends an unqualified application of this passage also, since it does

not appear that "the works of the devil" will be more than partially destroyed. Whatever may be the extent and honour of Christ's victories over him, in the future perdition of the impenitent at least *some* trophies will remain of his seduction of the first parents of mankind, and of his too assiduous temptation of their race, and will remain a permanent element in the universe of God.

In explanation of the difficulty thus presented, it is to be recollected that redemption is a vast and complicated operation, contemplating in reality many ends, some more near and some more remote, some more immediate and limited, some more wide and comprehensive. Besides many subordinate ends, it has undoubtedly one chief end, and it is after this that we are now to inquire. Now, we must look for the chief end of the work of redemption, not in its near and more immediate aims, but in some consideration more remote and more general than these; in something which may comprehend all the results of that great scheme, of whatever kind, and derive its fulfilment from them all. We want an end which shall be as truly accomplished in the perdition of the lost, as in the blessedness of the saved.

Now it is evident that, to arrive at such an end, we must get altogether beyond created beings, and have to do with God himself, from whom the chief end of the work of redemption must, in some way or other, be derived. In what manner, however, it may be asked, can God be interested in it? Certainly, not directly; that is to say, not in such manner that any of the advantages of it can accrue to him. It affects his character, however; not, indeed, as it is in itself, but as it appears before the universe. It is a manifestation of his attributes in every aspect of it, and the truth seems to be that for the sake of this manifestation it was undertaken. In the words of the apostle, God undertook the work of redemption "to the praise of his glory."

2. The conclusion at which we thus arrive by putting aside the nearer and more immediate objects of redemption, and looking at its remoter issues, may also be reached by a different path.

Redemption is one of the works of God, and, of course, partakes of their general character. What, then, we may ask, is the chief end of God in any of his works? If we can answer this question in one case, we may answer it in all.

He has brought into being a multitude of creatures which exist under our own eyes, and whose condition we can make the matter of close observation. For what chief end did he bring them into being? For their own sake? or for some other end? Now there are some who expressly and strongly affirm that God did bring creatures into being for their own sake, and they render their doctrine plausible by adducing some of the many adaptations to the well-being of creatures which are to be found in this wide world. These, and many more such illustrations, of course, I readily acknowledge, and render to God the glory of his goodness; I cannot but think, however, that the doctrine rests on insufficient grounds. And I assign the following reasons.

First, facts do not warrant this doctrine. Adaptations to the well-being of creatures, while numerous and admirable, are partial, and not universal, which, if the well-being of creatures were their chief end, they ought to be. Not in relation to sentient existence even, is it true that the conditions of life are altogether beneficial. It is only portions of the earth's surface which are either naturally fruitful, or capable of cultivation. Vast regions of it are occupied by fields of ice or by sandy deserts, by naked rocks, by mountains capped with eternal snow, or by furnaces of interior fire, sending forth torrents of igneous destruction. The atmosphere is not always balmy, or innocuous. Now a scorching sun ignites the forest; anon the thunder-cloud shoots forth its destructive bolt; and again the furious wind leaves in its track desolation. Not all plants are nutritious; some are poisonous. Not all animals are either beautiful, or useful, or safe; some are unsightly, hurtful, and dangerous. Many animals are predaceous, and among these the strong prey upon the weak, artfully carrying out their murderous instinct, and spreading terror and distress through whole tribes of helpless victims. Can it be said that such a world as this was created chiefly for the sake of the creatures which inhabit it?

Or look at the condition of human kind. See man doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, the prey of disease in a thousand forms, the victim of vices which nurture themselves in his heart, and the object of injuries inflicted on him by his fellows. Will any one who knows what human life is say that this was devised chiefly for the sake of man?

Or observe the course of divine Providence. After less than two thousand years, God swept away the race, a single family excepted, by a deluge. And now he does things scarcely less terrific. Witness plagues, famines, and pestilences; the anguish of the disappointed, the cry of the widow, and the moan of the fatherless. Was such an administration ordained chiefly for the sake of man?

Secondly, reason will not accept this doctrine. It surely behoves God to select a chief end the noblest and most worthy, and it could not but be to his dishonour to act for an inferior end when a greater was within his reach. Now, the well-being of creatures is not the noblest and most worthy end within reach of God in his works. An end derived from himself must be more glorious—ininitely more glorious—than any end derived from creatures can be, inasmuch as he is infinitely more glorious than they. Divine wisdom, therefore, dictates such a choice, and will not allow that the chief end of God's works shall be the good of creatures in any form, or anything but, in some form, himself.

Thirdly, the testimony of Scripture does not confirm this doctrine. It is, indeed, altogether of a contrary tenor. Explicit to this point is the language of the apostle: "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things" (Rom. xi. 36). Nor less so is that of the apocalyptic seer: "Thou hast created all things, and for thy glory they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 11).

To the usual form of expressing this sentiment, that God created all things *for his own glory*, the objection has been raised that divine action is thus ascribed to a love of admiration: a motive among the unworthiest by which even a human being can be actuated. Undoubtedly, a motive so mean cannot be ascribed to God; but this objection proceeds on a misunderstanding of the manner in which his works are to his glory. God's emotional nature is an infinite love of the right, the beautiful, and the happy, and of these in the order in which I have named them. This emotional nature is the only conceivable impulse of God's action, and it operates, of course, by leading him to produce objects which, in various measures and aspects, reflect and multiply himself, or exhibit in substantial forms the conceptions of his mind. In this respect his works are, and must be, to his glory, inasmuch as they are manifestations of himself, who is in all

respects essentially glorious; and the manifestation of his glory must be the chief end of them, not because he loves the admiration which is due to them, but because they are of necessity manifestations of himself.

Nor ought God's adoption of his own glory as the chief end of his works to be matter of complaint, but rather of complacency and joy. It is unspeakably the noblest chief end which can possibly be pursued; a chief end so vast as to comprehend all others, however remote or mysterious, and so sublime as to make all things great, however apparently trivial.

Now, if the glory of God is the chief end of his works at large, it undoubtedly is the chief end of the work of redemption in particular, since there can be no reason for making this an exception to the general rule. It was undertaken for the manifestation of himself, or for the visible exercise of his attributes, and display of his character. No difference in this respect arises from the fact that redemption is a remedial interposition, and not a part of the original order of things. Sin being foreseen, God foresaw also an opportunity for the further manifestation of his character by redemption, and for this chief end he undertook the work. Within this general conception all the issues, whether happy or miserable, of the work of redemption arrange themselves, and with it all of them, however diverse or opposite, may be harmonized.

II. The way is now open for us to inquire, in the second place, in what manner, and to what extent, the work of redemption subserves the end contemplated by it?

I am aware that I am now on the threshold of a theme at once vast and profound, and of one to which no finite intellect can do justice; but I shall endeavour to lay before you, with the utmost simplicity, a few hints, which may at least supply to you some scanty materials for devout meditation.

1. Here it is natural to refer, in the first instance, to the grace of God, which, according to the apostle, "bringeth salvation."

That the grace of God is illustriously displayed in the work of redemption is too manifest to need assertion; we may advert, however, to a few of the particulars in which "grace reigns."

Notice the provocation overcome. It is impossible for us

to estimate the offensiveness of sin to God. Not a thing, either indifferent, or excusable; not a thing, either resulting from divine arrangements, or in itself accidental. A voluntary impurity, intensely offensive to his infinite holiness, and a wilful transgression of his law, which "is holy, and just, and good." That his bosom should glow with holy and righteous displeasure was inevitable, and that he should have carried these sentiments out to their utmost expression would have been natural; but, that he should have formed a design of mercy towards creatures guilty of so deep provocation, was a marvel of grace.

Notice the spontaneity of the interposition. It was not that man, the sinner, sought the grace of his offended Maker. An alienated heart would have departed farther and farther from God, and have run to greater extremities in iniquity. The mercy shown to man is mercy, not only unsolicited, but in every sense repelled. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that God loved us" (1 John iv. 10). And herein his grace is more illustrious. It is persuasive to a benevolent heart when forgiveness is sought, and sought, perhaps, with tears and fervent importunity; but forgiveness unsought, and even undesired, must spring from a far deeper kindness.

Notice the cost incurred. "Without money and without price" as salvation is to men, it is to God a costly boon. Its indispensable basis was the humiliation and sacrifice of his only and well-beloved Son; an extremity of kindness from which we might have been sure that even divine benevolence, for creatures so unworthy, would have stayed. Well does the apostle declare Christ to be God's "unspeakable gift;" and its marvellous lovingkindness transcends all thought, as well as all expression. The blood of Christ was emphatically "precious" blood; not only more precious than that of bulls and of goats, which for ages had been shed in rivers to foreshadow it, but more precious than that of human kind, or of any created being, as the blood of the Son of God. What a pang (if we may so far accommodate the inadequate terms of human language) must it have cost the infinitely loving heart of the eternal Father to shed it! Yet "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

Notice the condition proposed. Neither grief nor toil constitutes the requisite condition of man's salvation, other than the suffering and the toil endured by Jesus, the Saviour; to mankind the condition is simply the acceptance of the divine mercy. "We pray you," says the apostle, "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20). A reconciled heart, manifesting itself in the acceptance of Christ's mediation, and in submission to his righteousness, is all that is required. Not of works, which would have involved a toil at once hopeless and impossible, but of grace, and grace incomparable.

Notice the blessings conferred. Of what inestimable value are they! Rich are the bounties of God's providence, but incalculably richer the blessings of his grace. Who shall set a price on peace and pardon; on deliverance from condemnation and acceptance with God; on sanctification and sonship; on grace and glory? Yet these are but a few of the gifts of redeeming love. All the wealth of the Indies is as nothing in comparison with them; the brilliancy of gems, and the glitter of crowns, vanish before them. These are God's best gifts, gifts of his heart—in one word, the gift of himself.

Notice the sovereignty exercised, in blended universality and discrimination. I speak without hesitation of the universality of divine love. He gave his Son for all. "God so loved the world." Like the light and the rain of heaven, this incomparable gift is presented for acceptance to every child of sin and sorrow. To some he gives more, even his Holy Spirit; an act of condescension to man's deep misery, in the communication of a gracious influence by which the stony heart is taken away, and the heart of flesh is given. This last is the crowning act of divine mercy, and begins the work of which eternity shall assuredly behold the completion.

2. Let us now transfer our contemplation from the grace of God to his holiness and justice, and see how these awful attributes acquire fresh honours in redemption.

Holiness and justice are manifested in every aspect of God's moral administration, but pre-eminently in this. His law is holy and just, but his redeeming work is still more illustriously so.

Observe the system of mediation, how it expresses purity which will suffer no stain. Even in the overflowing exercise

of his mercy, God is invincibly jealous for his holiness. Although he intends to redeem, and to receive offending man to his bosom as his child, he will not suffer him to approach in a direct manner because he is impure. The sinner is kept at an awful distance, until a medium is constituted through which he may approach without sullyng the purity of his Maker, and then the door is thrown open. But through the appointed way only may the sinner draw nigh. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," said Christ; "no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John xiv. 6). As, under the Mosaic dispensation, any approach to God except through the Levitical priesthood provoked a fiery displeasure, so still have we reason to say, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Through Jesus, the Mediator, all is peace, and rebels of every degree may come unto God through him; but, on every other side, the mount of communion is inaccessible, as if still surrounded with fire.

Observe the system of expiation, how it exhibits a righteousness which exacts all its due. Mercy beyond expression is to be exercised towards man; but, as it is to be exercised under a judicial system, it is not done until justice has received satisfaction for all its demands. Equitable as the law of God is, and bound as a God of infinite righteousness is to maintain it, its claim to active and passive fulfilment is not relaxed; and, if the obedience be not rendered, and the penalty endured, by the transgressor himself, but by another in his stead, still both are accomplished. And both are accomplished in such a manner as to render to the law, not only an honour equivalent to that which either an obedient or a suffering world could have rendered it, but an honour unspeakably greater, since, in both its parts, it is fulfilled, not by a mere man, but by the Son of God. In the requirement of such a sacrifice, God more strikingly exhibits his inexorable justice, and his inflexible adherence to absolute righteousness in the administration of his government, than he could have done by the condemnation of the entire race of mankind. His most brilliant deed of justice is that he "spared not his own Son," but "put *him* to grief, and made his soul an offering for sin."

Observe the final punishment of the impenitent, how it evinces a justice which does not shrink from the infliction of the severest penalties. It might have seemed as though a

God who pitied so tenderly, and did so much to save, could not destroy; but such an illusion, if it has ever existed, will hereafter be put utterly to flight. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm ix. 17). The everlasting happiness of the righteous will have its counterpart in the everlasting perdition of the ungodly. An awful issue, truly; but, if it were not just, it would have had no place in the divine threatenings; and, since it is just, its accomplishment can do God no dishonour. It is rather necessary to the complete vindication of his righteousness, and it will not be wanting.

3. Thus illustriously exhibited in redemption as are the grace and holiness of God, let us now advert to the manifestation of his wisdom.

The questions involved in the work of human redemption were (humanly speaking) of peculiar and pre-eminent difficulty. Not without their difficulties (humanly speaking still) had been the works, either of nature, or of providence; but redemption gave rise to a new set of questions, and to questions of much greater severity. To bring a universe out of nothing, to transform primeval chaos into beauty, to provide for all that live, and to care incessantly for innumerable worlds—all this was easy, compared with the task of releasing a rebellious world from righteous condemnation, and of raising a corrupted race to renovated purity. The solution of such problems required the exercise of profounder wisdom, and the devising of rarer expedients.

And the expedients devised were not only new, but altogether extraordinary. None but the divine mind could have conceived them, or have made any approach to the conception of them. Who, for example, could have formed the conception of laying a world's guilt and condemnation on a substitute, who in his own person should bear their iniquities? Or, if this general conception had been arrived at, who could have approached the idea of constituting such a substitute by the blending of the divine nature with the human, and of selecting as the victim for a world's iniquities the only-begotten Son of God? Yet by this idea, and by this alone, is the great problem of human redemption effectually solved. In comparison with this, even the other displays of divine wisdom, bright as they are, fade into shadow. Here may angels learn new lessons of its profundity, and an adoring

universe may be regarded as pouring forth its admiration in the language of the apostle—"O the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans xi. 33.)

Nor is it in the nature of the expedients alone that the wonders of divine wisdom appear; for, as the problem was difficult, so was the solution of it hazardous. It might seem that a worm for whom such a price was paid would be in danger of being lifted up with pride, and that a rebel to whom so much was freely forgiven might sin because grace abounded. To show such ample mercy without relaxing the bonds of moral obligation was by no means an easy problem; and, if an attempted solution of it had been unsuccessful, the second issue would assuredly have been worse than the first. We have seen in a late discourse how successfully this difficulty was treated, and how such a moral adaptation was given to the work of redemption as to render all its riches of grace conducive to the renovation of the heart, and the sanctification of the life.

4. From the grace, holiness, and wisdom of God, we turn our attention, in the last place, to his power.

The Lord is a God of power, and he has done many mighty things, so that the appellation of God Almighty most truly belongs to him; yet the most glorious display of his power is neither in earth, nor sun, nor stars, but in the work of redeeming grace.

In this work the power of God appears in a peculiar form. It is not physical, but moral; it is traced, not in the production of things which were not, but in the subordination to his will of things which are, and of things which are hostile to his glory. He finds this world in a condition of sin and sorrow of which it must be said, "An enemy hath done this;" he comes forth as to the battle, and he returns as a conqueror.

He obtains a conquest over man; man, the stubborn and haughty rebel, whose obdurate heart can resist alike both wrath and love. Yet he bows man at his feet, and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He makes the proud as lowly as a little child, and teaches the self-complacent to count all things but loss for Christ and his righteousness. Thus he shows that he not only can vanquish the mighty, but can lay the lofty low; that he not only can destroy a foe, but can convert an enemy into a friend.

He obtains a conquest over the world; the world, the declared and irreconcilable foe to God and man, by all its influences impeding the progress to future bliss. Now by the terrors of martyrdom, now by the fascinations of pleasure, the blended syren and despot attempts to obstruct, or ensnare, the heavenly traveller. But thus the Redeemer spake ere he himself quitted the scene of trial: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And he enables his followers to overcome it. He gains his victory in the persons of the weak, and "to them that have no might he increaseth strength." And, however hard the strife may be, he gives his people to say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

He obtains a conquest over Satan; Satan, the grand enemy to whose malignant hostility the ruin of our race is instrumentally to be ascribed. Plotting irretrievable mischief, it might have seemed much to the arch-fiend that he adopted a course which brought divine holiness and justice on his side, and made faithfulness and truth his allies; while a depraved heart presented a sphere too well adapted to his deep-seated and lasting dominion. But even the great adversary has been entangled in his own toils, and foiled at his own weapons. In the "hour of darkness" he slew the appointed Redeemer, and fancied, perhaps, that he had deprived the ruined race of their only friend; but in his death Jesus conquered, as the resurrection morn soon made manifest, and his presence at the Father's right hand, exalted to save, was greeted by the celestial song:—

"Thou hast ascended up on high,
Thou hast led captivity captive;
Thou hast received gifts for men,
Even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell
among them."

Psalm lxxviii. 18.

Now the ascended Saviour carries on the war with widening successes, and to destined triumph—"conquering and to conquer." Innumerable slaves of sin and Satan, rescued from his power, are gathering around the throne above; and, when the war shall have run its course, the great adversary, and his determined followers, shall be cast into outer darkness and fiery deeps, "where there is wailing and gnashing

of teeth," and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

In the few particulars on which I have thus slightly touched we have some glimpses of the manner in which the work of redemption manifests the character of God. The manifestations of it thus effected are quite new and peculiar, and such as never could have been supplied by any other occasion known to us. They are also of infinite excellency and value, inasmuch as they discover largely his most glorious attributes, and afford to the whole intelligent and holy creation occasion for his highest and eternal praise. God has read to the universe a lesson in the knowledge of himself which shall never be forgotten. Such an end is worthy of redemption, and of all its cost; an end in which all holy beings will for ever intensely sympathize and rejoice. If the created universe may be said to constitute a temple on which the name of the Almighty builder is inscribed in lines of light and beauty, a world redeemed may, perhaps, be viewed under a similar image, with the motto inscribed on its front in imperishable characters, "TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY."

I now take reluctant leave of the great subject which has occupied us. And what shall be my last words? Dear hearers, each of us has a personal interest in redemption, and an opportunity of securing its felicity for ourselves. Have we fled to Jesus for refuge from the wrath to come? And shall we at last be privileged to join the everlasting song—"To him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and honour, dominion and power, for ever and ever. Amen"?

LECTURES ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

THE ULTIMATUM.*

“What saith the Scripture?”—*Romans* iv. 3.

It is far from being certain, perhaps, that the proceedings in the case of *Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter* are as yet brought to a close. So far as they have hitherto gone, however, they constitute an event of many sides, every one of which presents an interesting aspect. But it is by no means my intention to notice these in detail. I shall pass over the lamentable, yet not uninteresting, spectacle, of the division now existing within the bosom of the Church of England: a schismatical condition, surely; and, if schism be, as ecclesiastics have incessantly proclaimed in the ears of nonconformists, a damnable sin, involving a very grave responsibility and peril somewhere. I shall take no notice of the comparatively unimportant question now so vehemently mooted—What is the doctrine of the Church of England? I make only this passing observation, that I do not think it possible to harmonize *all* the language of the Anglican formularies on the subject of baptism in any ONE view. That which more particularly interests me, and which is clearly of the greatest importance, is the force with which baptism itself is by these circumstances protruded into the public view, and the boldness with which the assertion is now made of its spiritual efficacy.

In relation to this question, there is great difference of opinion as to the quarter to which a decisive appeal should be made. The natural appeal of the Church of England to the Queen in Council, as head of the Anglican church, is vehemently repudiated. Many loudly call for a convocation of the clergy; while a high ecclesiastical functionary of the

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Romish church* issues a persuasive call to refer the matter to the pope. For my part, I cannot make my appeal to either of these quarters. The advocates of them may be held liable to the rebuke contained in the words of the prophet (Isaiah viii. 19, 20): "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God?—To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The question that I ask is taken from another portion of Holy Writ. "WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?" This is the final appeal, in our judgment, on all questions of religious controversy.

On this ground, then, I take up the assertion that baptism is the means of conferring spiritual benefits. I totally dissent from this view. I affirm, in the most unqualified terms, that baptism is not the means of conferring any spiritual blessings whatever, and my aim this evening will be to bring forward the scriptural arguments in support of this affirmation.

I.

I observe, in the first place, that, throughout the New Testament, spiritual benefits are habitually spoken of in connexion with another, and a very different, instrumentality. Remark, for example, the ministry of our divine Lord himself. We have the commencement of it recorded in Mark i. 14, 15: "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Surely these words express the terms on which spiritual benefits were to be enjoyed. The same idea is contained in Matt. ix. 13, where our Lord says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." In Luke xiii. 3, where he is speaking of the fate of those who had fallen victims to an accidental death, he conveys the same meaning when he declares, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." In the 15th chapter of this Gospel are three well-

* Dr. Wiseman.

known parables, in which our Lord brings out this truth more than once (Luke xv. 7, 10). Nothing of baptism is here.

When, on one occasion, the multitude who attended his ministry put to the great Teacher the question, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" the answer which he gave was in these terms:—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John vi. 28, 29). And this answer was in perfect accordance with the doctrinal statement which had been previously given to Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

If we turn from the ministry of our Lord to that of his immediate disciples, we are met by the same sentiment. When sent forth by their divine Master throughout the cities of Israel, "they went out, and preached that men should repent" (Mark vi. 12).

It was the same in the ministry of the apostles after the ascension of Christ, as a few references to the book of Acts will fully demonstrate. Thus, in the discourse of Peter recorded in the third chapter, we find him saying (ver. 19), "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The same apostle subsequently speaks of Jesus Christ in the following terms: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31). In the case of Cornelius and his company, the Holy Ghost in his supernatural gifts was poured out upon them before baptism; and, when Peter afterwards narrated the circumstance at Jerusalem, his auditors were constrained to make the admission, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts xi. 18). We find Paul at Philippi replying to the anxious question of the jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" by the explicit direction, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (xvi. 30, 31). At Athens, amidst assembled philosophers, he proceeds on the same principle. In his discourse on Mars Hill, referring to the antecedent period of unrebuked idolatry, he says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30). In his address at Miletus to the elders of the church at Ephesus, this apostle

describes the entire course of his ministry in the following terms:—"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). And, when pleading before Agrippa, he uses language of similar import: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts xxvi. 19, 20). In one of his epistles, indeed, Paul uses language respecting baptism which is quite irreconcilable with his believing it to be the means of conferring spiritual benefits (1 Cor. i. 14, 15, 17): "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

Perfectly consistent with the accounts in the Acts are the epistles written by the apostles. With what instrumentality spiritual benefits were in their estimation connected, there is abundant evidence to show. Thus, for example, the apostle of the Gentiles expresses himself in the opening of his epistle to the Romans:—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. i. 16, 17). And subsequently, in the same epistle, he says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). Again (Gal. iii. 26), "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "By grace are ye saved, through faith," testifies the same apostle to the Ephesians (Eph. ii. 8). And, to conclude a class of quotations which might be enlarged almost without limit, to the Galatians he makes the general and emphatic declaration, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6).

Now from the fact thus copiously established, that spiritual benefits are habitually spoken of in the New Testament as obtained by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, it is surely natural and just to infer that bap-

tism is not one of the terms of their possession. Here is a proper and sufficient instrumentality fully declared. And, if baptism really be necessary to the enjoyment of spiritual benefits, then is there a great deal in this language that is incorrect and deceptive. The world thus instructed could hardly fail to have been led astray.

II.

It may be said, however, that I have not quoted all the passages that bear upon the subject; that, if there are many passages which speak of spiritual benefits as being enjoyed by means of repentance and faith, making no mention of baptism, there are also some in which baptism is conjointly introduced.

To a certain extent this is true, and I will notice the principal instances presently. I must first observe, however, that some of the passages taken to relate to baptism are so taken without any warrant, and, as I believe, without any justice.

1. One on which great stress has been laid occurs in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, and is in the following terms:—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5).

It is gratuitously assumed that this phrase, being "born of water," refers to baptism. I entertain a totally different view, but it would lead me too far from my immediate subject to enter into a full exposition; it will be sufficient for my present design to show that the text cannot refer to baptism.

The argument I employ for this purpose is short and simple. It is this, that you cannot interpret this passage of baptism without involving yourself in insuperable difficulties. For it is manifest that the language employed by our Lord is absolute, and that it establishes a principle universal, and without exception. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is not doing justice to these words (understanding them of baptism) to say (in the language of the Church of England) that they make baptism "*generally* necessary to salvation." They make it *absolutely* necessary. Thus taken, they teach that except a man be baptized he cannot be saved. And

they teach this just as clearly and inevitably as that no one can be saved except he be born of the Spirit. But the position that none but the baptized can be saved is wholly untenable. The Church of England does not pretend to maintain it. And where would such a belief lead? None but those who are baptized can be saved. Then follows one of two things. Either spiritual benefits are now conferred upon a totally different condition from that originally laid down, and acted upon for four thousand years; or not one of the human race antecedent to John the Baptist is in heaven: for earlier than John, baptism, as a divine ordinance, had no existence. Yet was there hope of salvation for man. Nor, in truth, was the way of salvation then revealed in any respect different from that which we have seen to be habitually exhibited in the New Testament. Abel was saved by faith (Heb. xi. 4). "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3). And he is declared to be an example of the way in which men were to be saved to the end of the world (Rom. iv. 11, 12). "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. iii. 7).

The effect, consequently, of holding baptism as absolutely necessary to salvation, is to cut off from hope the entire race of men for four thousand years. But, besides this, the same notion dooms by far the greater part of the world at the present time to perdition, since those who have received the rite of baptism have ever been a very small minority of mankind. The restriction of salvation within bounds so extremely narrow, not upon a moral, but upon a merely ritual ground, is surely inconceivable. Besides, if the notion in question be true, then are lost a great many persons who have repented of sin and believed in Christ; for there have been many who have, according to undeniable evidence, repented of sin and believed in Christ, who yet have not been baptized: but this is surely impossible.

Further, the declaration, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," implies the truth of the converse—namely, that every man who *is* born of water and the Spirit *shall* do so. Hence, if we understand being born of water to relate to baptism, we are led to this conclusion, that all who are baptized will be saved—another idea absolutely untenable. Even

the Church of England admits that baptismal grace may be sinned away. Now, embarrassed by these two difficulties, I take it to be impossible that this language—"born of water"—can be interpreted of baptism.

2. Another passage which I hold to be misapplied is 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This is said to refer to baptism; but upon what authority? Baptism is certainly neither named, nor necessarily implied. It was their being justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, that constituted the washing which the apostle here speaks of as having been experienced by the Corinthian converts.

3. A third passage on which stress is, in my judgment, improperly laid, occurs in Titus iii. 5:—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Here again I ask, by what authority is this understood of baptism? Or the words of the same apostle in Eph. v. 26, where he uses nearly similar language!—"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Nothing more is to be found in these passages than the use of a very familiar and a very expressive metaphor, by which the "washing with water" is made representative of "sanctification by the word," and the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." That baptism is intended is a purely gratuitous assumption, without evidence, and without probability.

III.

There are passages, however, in which baptism is mentioned conjointly with spiritual privileges, and to a consideration of these I will now proceed. I may observe respecting them generally, that all such passages must be ruled by those which I have already quoted, and be interpreted in harmony with the great principle so plainly laid down in the New Testament. But an examination of them in detail will clearly show, that each by its context supplies materials for its own explanation.

1. I commence with John's baptism, of which we have an account in Mark i. 4, and Luke iii. 3:—"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." It is, I suppose, from this passage that the current phrase has been derived of which we hear so much—"baptism for the remission of sins." But I ask any person who hears or reads this text, to say whether this does not do a palpable injustice to it. It was not baptism, but repentance for the remission of sins, that John proclaimed, and he required a profession of repentance on his hearers being baptized. Hence, as Matthew states (ch. iii. 6), the people "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins;" and he afterwards warns them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." That this should be transformed into baptism for the remission of sins, instead of repentance for the remission of sins, cannot but be deemed an entire and mischievous perversion.

2. I now advert to the commission. We have it recorded by Matthew in the following terms: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19). To this Mark adds: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16). In relation to these passages it is clear that a profession of faith is understood as preceding baptism, and as constituting the ground of it, spiritual privileges being associated with faith, and consequently possessed antecedently to baptism. Baptism, therefore, cannot be any part of the terms on which spiritual blessings are enjoyed. In accordance with this it is to be remarked, that the absence of baptism is not associated with perdition. It is neither here, nor elsewhere in Scripture, said,—He that is not baptized shall be condemned. Baptism is simply an act of obedience to Christ on the part of those who believe on his name. It becomes obligatory on their believing in him; and it stands as a test of their sincerity, but not as a condition of their justification. That this is the true import of the commission is manifest from a passage in the Gospel by Luke, which clearly expresses its meaning in independent terms: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47).

3. Acts ii. 38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." This part of Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost is evidently wrong read, if he is understood to exhort the people to be baptized for the remission of sins. The structure of the passage clearly requires the clauses to be placed in the connexion following:—"Repent every one of you for the remission of sins, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." The remission of sins is evangelically connected with repentance; a profession of repentance is required as preceding baptism. The latter is merely a test of sincerity, an act of obedience then becoming obligatory, not a term of forgiveness.

4. Acts xxii. 16. "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This phrase—"wash away thy sins"—cannot be understood of the forgiveness of sins in any sense. It refers to an action on the part of Paul, but the forgiveness of sins is not our own act, it is the act of God towards us. By what action of Paul could his sins be washed away? Only by an inward cleansing, or by the cultivation of holiness of life. Neither is the phrase, "wash away thy sins," grammatically connected with "be baptized." The structure of the sentence rather requires it to be read thus:—Arise, and be baptized; and, having called upon the name of the Lord (that is, having professed your faith in him), pursue a holy and consistent life.

5. 1 Peter iii. 21. Here the apostle, having spoken of the ark, "wherein eight souls were saved by water," goes on to say—"The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Well, if baptism do save us in any sense, this verse clearly tells us that it is in a sense figurative, and not real. And further, the method in which baptism saves us, or stands connected with our salvation, is here plainly described by the apostle. It is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh," that is, not the literal purification of the body, or the baptism, but the "answer of a good conscience towards God," that is, the faith of which it is an outward manifestation.

6. In closing this list I quote again Acts ii. 38, 39: "Then

Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise is unto you and to your children." Upon the latter part of this passage an attempt has been made to found the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is imparted in baptism. This is clearly unsustained, however, inasmuch as the promised communication of the Spirit, whatever may be its nature, was to be after baptism, and not in it,—“Be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” But, further, it is evident from the context that the apostle is not here speaking of the regenerating or sanctifying influence of the Spirit: first, because this must be presupposed in the exercise of repentance, which preceded baptism, and, secondly, because an influence of a different kind is expressly named. On that glorious day, the day of Pentecost, when the disciples had spoken in many tongues, Peter (ver. 16, 21) instructs them had been fulfilled the prediction of the prophet Joel (ch. ii. 28-32), in which he says,—“On my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” This is the promise of the Spirit which those who should repent, and be baptized in the name of Christ, were to receive. And the fact is clearly recorded to have corresponded with this expectation; for by the laying on of the apostles’ hands after baptism the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were conferred: see Acts viii. 14-17; xix. 5-7.

I have thus brought before you the principal passages which relate to this subject; and I think it must be clear to you that they entirely fail to show that baptism is either the condition, or any part of the condition, on which spiritual benefits are to be conferred, or of the instrumentality by which they can be conferred, on man.

IV.

I might content myself with this conclusion, but I go on to observe, that, as specific passages of Scripture do not bear out the idea of the spiritual efficacy of Baptism, so the alleged doctrinal ground for the assertion of it is of no scriptural force.

The basis of the notion of the spiritual efficacy of baptism is laid theologically in the doctrine of original sin. It is

held by the advocates of it, that, in consequence of Adam's transgression, all his posterity are born into a state of condemnation on the one hand, and of spiritual incapacity on the other. From these consequences of their first parent's crime, it is alleged, it is indispensable that his descendants should be as soon as possible relieved; and this relief is to be obtained by baptism.

Now with respect to this statement I observe, in the first place, that this version of the doctrine of original sin is liable to the gravest question. There have been divines (and I confess myself to be of their opinion) who, still holding in every scriptural sense the doctrine of original sin, repudiate altogether the view above stated. They maintain, on the contrary, that no wrath from heaven is denounced against mankind but for their actual iniquities (Romans i. 18), and that every responsible creature of God is brought into existence with all the faculties requisite for obeying his will. The advocates of these sentiments are as yet far from having been refuted; and, if their views be just, there remains nothing for baptism to do. The whole alleged basis of it disappears.

If, for the sake of argument, however, I admit the questionable theory, the conclusion contended for by no means follows. Supposing mankind to be in so unhappy a condition, it is not evident that their relief is to be effected by baptism. No necessity entails this consequence, since it is clear that God *might* relieve them in some other way. And as "the only wise God" is not shut up to find a remedy by baptism, so neither are men, even the kindest and best disposed of men, at liberty to assign this rite to a purpose to which God in his Word has not assigned it. This cannot be less than fearful presumption. The notion that baptism removes these evils, however, when carefully examined, turns out to be a very unsatisfactory one. This rite is both local and temporary, whereas the evils to be remedied are both constant and universal. Why, all the people born into the world since the fall have been subject to this mischief, which was entailed four thousand years before the institution of baptism, and two thousand years before the appointment of circumcision. I ask, then, was there any remedy for it before the times of the New Testament? If there was not, God allowed four thousand years of the world's history—it

has not yet existed six thousand years—to pass away under the weight of a calamity sweeping the whole race to perdition, without devising a remedy; which is surely incredible. If there was, that remedy could be neither baptism nor circumcision. And, if there was a method satisfactory to divine wisdom of effecting so grand and important a purpose for so large a portion of the history of mankind, why are we to yield ourselves, without any attempt to show a reason or a command, to an imagination that the system is altogether changed, and a novel method introduced?

Besides, original sin, which runs through all ages, affects all regions. But baptism is necessarily local, the preaching of the Gospel having been so. Here, then, is a calamity depending on no moral cause in the individual, but wholly of an accidental nature, and, if it call for a remedy at all, calling for a universal remedy, for which, nevertheless, the remedy supposed to be devised is such that it inevitably leaves by far the greater portion of the evil unredressed! O the difference between the mercies of man and the mercies of God! Is it not well for mankind that it is written—"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord"? (Isaiah lv. 8.)

If I am asked whether, if baptism do not relieve infants from original sin, there is any other use of which it can be to them, I say that I am not called upon to answer that question, since I do not believe in the scriptural authority of infant baptism. It is for its advocates to assign a use for it, and I think that, having no scriptural guide, they have exercised a very commendable ingenuity in assigning it to the removal of original sin. I am willing, however, to reply to the question in direct terms. And I answer that I do not think baptism is, according to the Scriptures, of any use to infants at all; and my judgment on this point strengthens my conviction of the unscriptural character of infant baptism itself.

If I am pushed another step, and asked whether the utility of baptism is totally to disappear, I answer, Certainly not. Those who profess to believe in Jesus Christ are called upon to confess him before men, and, by being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, they make this "good confession." This is the use of baptism. It is an ordained act of profession, and its details are so

arranged by the wisdom of the only Lawgiver as to be representative of the great Christian transformation, and its consequences. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans vi. 3, 4).

V.

I observe, once more, that the assertion of the spiritual efficacy of baptism totally deranges the evangelical system in its adaptation to mankind.

The Gospel, of course, has an adaptation to mankind. It is the mode in which God appeals to the understanding, to the conscience, and to the heart. It is an appeal to all nations and tribes; but it is as addressed to man individually that it is to have its effect.

Now, looking at the case apart from any supposed amelioration by baptism, its aspect is altogether simple and consistent. The Gospel speaks of men as sinners. It exhibits in a profound and searching manner both the internal and the external depravity of the race, and describes the actual state of the world in terms of melancholy import, but of undoubted truth. It declares the wrath of God to be revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men. It calls upon men to submit themselves to God's mercy as manifested in the gift and expiatory sacrifice of his Son, and, under the influence of his love, to consecrate themselves to his praise. All this is plain, and without confusion. Every sinner who will accept this invitation, and yield himself to this appeal, will be graciously received by Christ here, and be at last presented before the throne of God in heaven.

But let it be supposed that there is introduced into the Gospel system the element of baptismal regeneration, or the idea that baptism has an efficacy to confer spiritual benefits, and the whole scene is changed. Now the entire community is to be addressed from the first in language totally different. Instead of being solemnly told that they are sinners, and warned of the wrath to come, they must be assured that in

their baptism they were justified, and brought graciously by God into his family, while at the same time that most blessed change, spiritual regeneration, took place upon them. Hence the precepts to be addressed to them are altogether new. The apostolic testimony of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," would be altogether out of place among them. They have no need of conversion. They are beyond reach of our Lord's declaration, "Ye must be born again." They have nothing to do but to build themselves up on the foundation on which baptism has placed them, to lead a good life, to keep to their church, and to believe that all will be well.

Without determining for the moment which of these processes is right, it may at all events be affirmed that they are different from one another throughout. Neither in form nor in substance are they one and the same. They cannot both be comprehended in the one Gospel; they are different, and even contradictory, gospels. There can be no reason to hesitate, however, in determining which of them is true. The New Testament is too plain upon this matter to be mistaken. The scheme of baptismal regeneration subverts the Gospel of Christ.

From the radical difference between these two systems, arise the multiplied and confounding diversities of opinion which prevail within the Establishment on the way of salvation. Some go all lengths, and affirm in unqualified terms that all the baptized are thereby regenerated and made "children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." These cast aside without disguise all evangelical appeals to the hearts and consciences of men. At the other extreme are men who, deeply acquainted with divine truth and the experience of personal religion, preach as plain a Gospel as was ever preached in any conventicle. These throw overboard, practically, the formularies of the church. And between these two extremes are found innumerable diversities. The Gospel trumpet gives forth no uniform sound, but a more or less uncertain one. It cannot but be felt by all spiritually enlightened hearers, that the evangelical clergy generally acquit themselves in the pulpit with a very perceptible measure of indistinctness and embarrassment.

Such a state of things can afford no satisfaction to thought-

ful men. There is clearly something wrong. The Gospel of Christ ought to have free course, and that which obstructs it ought to be taken out of the way.

I have thus endeavoured to conduct you, dear hearers, by scriptural and careful argument, to the conclusion that the assertion of the spiritual efficacy of baptism is entirely erroneous, and that salvation is to be obtained only by the personal exercise of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To this I know an objection has been drawn, from the comparatively small number of those who give evidence of personal piety. "What!" it is said, "is no one saved but those who experience such exercises? Who then can be saved? This is a way of dooming almost all men to perdition." Well, it is true that the bearing of this sentiment is solemn, and even awful, but the argument brought against it has no force. The same argument, if argument it be, might be brought against baptism itself. "You say that only those who are baptized will be saved. But those who are baptized are the few and not the many. And how can you be content with a means of salvation so restricted in its administration?" There is, however, no argument in the allegation. The question, who shall be saved, and who shall not, altogether rests with God. His Word exclusively must be taken on this subject. If it be few that be saved according to his method, let him account for it, and assign the reason. But, to tell men that they may be saved by baptism because the way of salvation by personal experience is difficult or unwelcome, is to provide an opiate for their souls, and to incur an awful responsibility. It is man's doing, not God's. It is the doing of a spiritual adversary by the hand of man. I would not be the instrument of such a deception for the value of my own soul, nor for a thousand worlds; nor would I be the victim of it. I conjure you to be none of you the victims of it. See, upon God's own authority, how a sinner is to be saved, and who they are that will be so. Trust not a day, nor an hour, nor a moment, to baptism, for ascertaining and rectifying your state with God; "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision"—neither baptism nor non-baptism—"but faith, which worketh by love."

THE CHURCH.*

“Christ loved the Church.”—*Ephesians* v. 25.

It is, of course, nothing but a motto that I want for the introduction of the subject of my present discourse. That subject is briefly expressed in the two words—**THE CHURCH**; affording me wide scope as to the matters of fact and observation that I may choose to adopt in relation to it.

The subject is, evidently, on the first blush of it, of much interest and importance. First, because it is a part of evangelical truth. Secondly, because it is a controverted part of evangelical truth. Thirdly, because the controversy to which it gives rise involves very serious practical results. And, fourthly, because the controversy arising out of it is of great present urgency and pressure.

In entering upon this subject, however, I shall not make any prominent reference to the controversy existing, nor throw myself into the wilderness of strange notions which are abroad concerning it. I shall begin *here*—with this Book, and endeavour simply to trace out the information here presented to us; owning, as we do, this blessed book as the foundation of all evangelical truth, and the standard of all professed evangelical systems.

No advantage can be derived in this matter from any attempt to trace the etymology of the word *church*. Although it seems to be derived from the Greek, nevertheless it will not be found in any way assistant to our present inquiry. The Greek word in the New Testament which is the representative of our English term *church* is, as is well known, *ecclesia*; and the term *church* may be said to be the sacred or ecclesiastical rendering of it.

* A Lecture delivered at Falcon Square Chapel, London, on Thursday evening, October 19th, 1843.

My observations upon this term as used in the New Testament, are these.

1. First, the term *ecclesia* has not in itself any religious, or sacred, meaning. It means simply an assembly convened by a summons, or impulse, of any kind, in any circumstances of order or disorder, and for any purpose, civil, or religious. That it does so a single instance may satisfy you. In the nineteenth chapter of Acts, where we have an account of the uproar at Ephesus made by Demetrius and the craftsmen, we read this as the address of the magistrate: "If ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly"—*ecclesia*. It would seem very strange to read it—"It shall be determined in a lawful *church*." And then the narrative goes on: "When he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly"—*ecclesia*. It would be very strange to read it—"He dismissed the *church*."

Thus it appears that the word *church* is not to be used as the translation of the term *ecclesia* wherever it occurs; but rather that it cannot be fitly so used, unless that term occurs in circumstances indicating the propriety of such a translation. It is to be seen from the context whether the term *ecclesia* is used in the religious sense in which we usually take the word *church*, before this word can with any propriety at all be used as the translation of it.

There are two cases in which, as it seems to me, this rule has been violated by our translators.

One of these occurs in Stephen's address in the seventh chapter of the Acts, the thirty-eighth verse, where he speaks thus: "This [Moses] is he that was with *the church* [*ecclesia*] in the wilderness, with the angel that spake to him in the mount Sinai." Now the term *ecclesia* denoting *assembly*—*congregation*—the gathering together of persons—it would have been plainly the direct way here to have said, "This is he that was with the assembly (or congregation) in the wilderness;" the Israelitish nation clearly constituting an assembly, but not so clearly constituting a church. My own belief is that they did not constitute a church. Of course, any person that *did* believe they constituted a church might use that word here. For the most part, however (as far as I have had opportunity of observing), this very passage is currently quoted as a proof that the Israelitish nation was a church; while it plainly can be no proof on that question,

inasmuch as it requires the affirmative to be previously settled before the propriety of using the word *church* here, as a translation of *ecclesia*, can be made out.

Another case of the same kind, as I understand it, occurs in the gospel of Matthew: "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, . . . and take with thee one or two more; if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto *the church*; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." There being at that time no body of persons in existence that can be conceived to be denoted by the term *church*, there seems something unwarrantable in using the term here at all. A prevailing idea among commentators, if I recollect rightly, seems to have been that our Lord was speaking by anticipation, and that he meant to give a direction, which would come into use when there should be a church; but that is, to me, far-fetched. Commentators and lexicographers differ about it; and there are some of high authority—I may mention Bretschneider—who give their opinion that it did not mean the church in any sense, but that it meant an assembly convened and constituted for judicial purposes. "If he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the *ecclesia*," that is to say, the judicial assembly, the last resort in cases of offence.

2. My second observation upon this word is, that, when it has a religious meaning, it would naturally have a religious meaning congruous with its ordinary meaning; and that, as in an ordinary sense it means an assembly, so in a religious sense also it should mean an assembly. As, in the former sense, it indicates an assembly gathered together by any summons or impulse, and for any purposes; so in the latter, an assembly still, but gathered together under religious impulses, and for religious purposes—any assembly, or company of persons, gathered together by the Gospel; by the force of Gospel truth and precept, and for evangelical purposes.

This is, in fact, the meaning of the word *church* in a great number of the instances in which it occurs in the Scripture. It is frequently employed to denote local Christian assemblies, or companies of the professed disciples of Christ. Thus, you remember, we have—"the church at Jerusalem"—"the churches of the saints"—"the churches of the Gentiles"—"then had the churches rest"—and a large variety of instances besides: in all which it plainly means a company

of persons professing to be disciples of Jesus, gathered together under Gospel influences, and for Gospel ends.

3. Then, in the third place, from this meaning, by a process of individualization, the word *church* is sometimes used to denote, individually, the professed disciples of Jesus. So, when it is said by Paul that "he persecuted the church," it is plain that he meant by this phrase to speak of individual disciples of Christ. He did not persecute *the church* in its social and organized state and capacity; he persecuted individual men and women, and "hailed them to prison" for the sake of Jesus. And so, a church consisting of a company of professed disciples of Jesus, the term is thus, by an individualizing process, used concerning the disciples singly.

In the same manner it is used in the exhortation given by the apostle to the elders at Ephesus: "Feed the church of God." "The church of God" is not to be fed in the mass; it is to be fed in the individual, and the feeding of the church of God is feeding individual disciples of Christ. Here, again, is the individualizing process, by which a word, meaning in the first instance, and strictly, a company, comes to be used for the single members of whom it is constituted.

4. Fourthly, as, on the one hand, by a process of individualization, this word, which denotes a company of professed Christians, is used to denote each of them; so, by a process of generalization, which is just the antithetic process to the other, it is used sometimes in relation to all the companies of professed Christians in existence. Thus, for example, in the first of Corinthians, the twelfth chapter and twenty-eighth verse, the apostle says, that God had "set some *in the church*, first apostles, secondarily prophets," and so forth. He had "set some in the church;" not in any particular church, but this was God's arrangement concerning all the churches, or companies of professed believers in Jesus. It relates to the system and dispensation at large; to the organization and administration of them all. And in like manner, in the first of Timothy, the third chapter and fifteenth verse, Paul says—"These things write I unto thee that thou mightest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is *the church* of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Not here, again, denoting any one particular company of the saints, but having respect to all companies of the saints in existence; so that Timothy

might know, in whatsoever company of them he was, "how he ought to behave himself."

The word *church* is thus used, not, as it appears to me, denoting that the various companies of professed believers in Jesus were in any sense one company, but after the manner of an abstract term; all the companies of professed believers having such a perfect identity (if they were what they ought to be), first, in the character of the parties who constituted them; next, in the authority by which they were formed and governed; and, lastly, in the ends to which they were directed, that what was to be said of one of them was to be said with equal propriety of them all. So that, in speaking of things relating to them all, it was a matter of convenience to form an abstract term, as we are perpetually doing in human language; to speak of *the church*, instead of *the churches*, of Christ.

5. There is yet another modification of this word; according to which it is made to mean the place where a company of professed believers in Jesus met. The only passage that appears to favour this use of the term occurs in the eleventh chapter of the first of Corinthians, where the apostle, speaking of eating and drinking in the Lord's supper, asks—"Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye *the church* of God, and shame them that have not?" It has been thought by some, that the term *church* is here used to denote the place where the company of disciples assembled. I see that upon this matter authorities and lexicographers differ. Bloomfield and some others think (and I agree with them) that the reference of the apostle here is to the company of believers; but whether it be so or not is a question altogether without bearing upon our present subject. I merely mention it in passing. It would not be an unnatural or forced thing that the word *church*, being used first to denote an assembly, should afterwards come to be used for the place where that assembly met. It is certain that cases of this sort occur in Greek writers. As, for example, the term *agora*—a market; denoting first the people who came to buy and sell, and then the place where they met for this purpose.

6. Lastly, the term *church* is used in the New Testament to denote the whole company of the redeemed, the elect of God, and the ransomed by the blood of Jesus. The phrase I have read as the motto for this discourse is a clear example

of this. "Christ loved the *church*, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." These words clearly must be understood of the whole of the ransomed race. There are other examples of the same usage. One, in the twelfth of the Hebrews, it may be enough to quote. "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels ; to the general assembly and *church* of the first-born, which are written in heaven."

Now this, so far as I know, is an account of the various senses in which the term *church* is used in the New Testament. Having gone through the entire list of places, I do not find it, in my own judgment, used in any other sense ; and, certainly, not in any case to denote, either the whole number of pious people at any time upon earth, or the whole number of persons organized in the profession of Christianity.

It results, then, from this inquiry—

First, that the body, to which the term *the church* is emphatically applicable, and the only body to which it is applicable at all, is the entire multitude of Christ's redeemed. This, of course, is one ; and there can be but one ; there cannot be a second.

In the second place, subordinately to this, which is *the church*, and the only body that can with any propriety be so called, we are warranted to speak of *a church* ; this, in New Testament language, being a company of persons professing to follow Jesus Christ, and to keep his ordinances. Now, as of *the church* there is but one, and can be but one, so of *churches* there may be many, and there *are* many. I was going to say, there have been many from the beginning ; of course, however, there was a short time during which there was only one, but others very soon came into existence.

Now for each of these *churches*, for each of the companies of his professed disciples, our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted an organization : an organization, consisting, as I find it, of pastors and deacons, the qualifications of which officers are stated in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, and the instructions concerning the duties and appointment of them duly given. For each company of professed believers in his name,

Jesus Christ has instituted a proper organization such as it has pleased him to appoint ; and it behoves all companies of persons who gather themselves together in the name of Christ to see that, to the very best of their knowledge and faithfulness, they institute and maintain the organization and discipline which their avowed Master has appointed. But Jesus Christ has not appointed, so far as I can find, any organization by which the whole of these separate companies, or any two of them, are to be bound together. Each has a complete organization, to be established, to exist, and to act, within itself ; but I know of nothing, no trace of any organization in the New Testament, whereby all these companies were to be combined into one, or whereby any two of them were to be bound the one to the other. On the contrary, the completeness of the organization of each evidently indicates Christ's design that each should be independent of the rest. If there had been an intention that one should be in organic union with another, it would seem that the organization of each should have been not so complete. According to the perfect organization of each, and the fulness of authority evidently committed and confided to each in the New Testament, there is not any need of the combination of all together. But, in truth, there is no possibility of it ; the very object and purpose for which the organization of each body is intended are interfered with and frustrated, in so far as any organic connexion is instituted between it and any other. The disciples of Jesus Christ are called upon to "love one another ;" the *churches* of Jesus Christ are not called upon to love one another. Love is an individual thing, like all other Christian graces ; it cannot be exercised by a church, that is, by a company. Suppose you have ten people, or a hundred, or five hundred ; if there be any love in these five hundred persons towards others, it must be in the breast of individuals ; it cannot be in the mass, otherwise than as composed of individuals. Some individuals may have love, and some not ; but the very notion that *the company* is to exercise love is an absurd one altogether. Christians, as Christians, are to love one another ; and love is the only and the sufficient union of Christians. I believe, neither in the obligation, nor in the possibility, of any other union, and never shall have any part in hunting after such a chimera.

If, then, in speaking of *the church*, we ever make use of

this term in relation to *the churches* of Christ upon earth, it is to be recollected that, in this case, we employ an abstract term, not to intimate that there is existing upon earth any society, or number of societies, which can be called *the church* in any proper sense, but simply because all companies of professed believers have so much in common (and ought to have everything) that, as a matter of convenience in the use of language, we use an abstract term, and speak of them under the general denomination of *the church*.

There are thus two bodies distinctly before us.

1. The one is *the church* as it includes the entire multitude of the redeemed, the whole body of Christ's elect. And the characteristics of this body are not at all difficult to be discerned. I have said already that it is of necessity *one*; there can be but one such company; there cannot be a second. And the characteristics of it further are these.

First: That every individual in *the church* (so understood) is of necessity a person of true piety, and actually interested in Christ's salvation.

Secondly: That every person of true piety, and actually interested in Christ's salvation, is of necessity a member of this church. *The church* being the whole multitude of Christ's redeemed, of God's elect, there can be no salvation out of it; no person that is not a member of it can be saved. It is the Catholic church. The word *catholic*, by the way, is an instrument whereby ecclesiastical jugglers have performed a most marvellous amount of legerdemain. It is derived from the Greek, and means simply the same with that very plain English word *universal*. And the meaning of the Romish church, when she undertook to call herself the Catholic church, was that she wanted herself to be thought, and that she claimed to be, the universal church, just in that sense that no one who was not in her communion could be saved; therefore she called herself catholic, or universal. We now seem to think *catholic* means *liberal*: it is clear, however, that in that case it meant *illiberal*. A more impudent assumption was never attempted. The real catholic, or universal, church is the multitude of Christ's redeemed; and that is the only church to which the term *catholic* can, with either truth or common sense, for a moment be affixed.

Thirdly: The connexion of any individual with the church

as we are now speaking of it, is necessarily vital. It is by faith in Jesus Christ, and by that instrumentality alone, that a sinner is connected with the multitude of the redeemed. The body is a living body; and by spiritual life alone can any member, even the humblest and the smallest, be connected with it.

Fourthly: There is another characteristic of this body, the spiritual, the universal, church: it is a body at present hypothetical, and not yet actually existing. Some of the elect of God are not yet born; ages and generations to come are to witness their introduction into this world, in order to their preparation for, and transport to, a better. So that the church, in this sense, is a body inchoate; begun, and not perfected; waiting the developments of God's providence and grace, before the constituent members of it shall be wholly brought into existence. A part of this body is already gone to heaven, and part of it is on earth. From the beginning of the world—or, at least, since the fall—until now, the members of this body, after experiencing God's grace on earth, have been taken to glory; and there a large part of them are. The whole multitude of the redeemed must clearly be taken to comprehend those that are gone to heaven, the saints that are on earth, and the saints that are hereafter to be born. If any be wanting of either of the three classes, the multitude of the redeemed will be so far defective.

Fifthly: In the next place, the church, in this sense, never has been upon earth in a visible state. The members of it never have been distinguishable. The people, the men and the women, have been visible; but their character has never had any marks by which it could be absolutely known. There is nothing known of piety on earth but by profession—profession more or less justified, or falsified, by conduct; but profession and conduct together leading, after all, to nothing but a probable, or a proximate, judgment. There never has been a man in this world (Jesus Christ alone excepted) whose piety was unquestionable; concerning whom either he himself, or anybody else, had a sufficient ground to pronounce an absolute judgment. The whole of this life of ours is a period of probation, presenting temptations to the last; and there is no man, till death has sealed his character, concerning whom it can be certainly known to us in what state he will die. *God* knows it; but there are no marks and tokens

by which *we* can come to any absolute judgment of the piety of any individual. He is a professor—we estimate the profession in charity; we arrive at probabilities by observation of each other's conduct, but absolute knowledge pertains to God alone. So that the members of the church now in glory, though they have been upon earth, have not, as such, been known upon earth. They may have been known as professors, or they may not; but as members of the church spiritual they never have been known, and never have borne any marks by which they might be known. Such knowledge never was confided to men. There never has been any attempt to throw them into any organization here; nor was there ever any design, or any system of organization, manifested, by which Christ's redeemed should be brought into any visible form, or compacted into any earthly union. They are individually here dealt with by God's grace; they are carried through this world triumphantly to a better; and THE CHURCH—the multitude of the ransomed—have no formal union whatever, save that union in glory to which all shall be conducted, and in which Christ shall be glorified, when he shall present them without fault, with exceeding joy, before his Father's face.

2. The characteristics of the other body of which we have been speaking, are equally plain—A church of Christ, a company of professed disciples of Jesus. Of such I have said there may be many; there are many. And their characteristics are such as these.

In the first place, the bond of union with them is external. It is by some rite, as by baptism, for example; or by some communication of wish or desire, followed by acceptance and acquiescence upon the part of the church; or upon profession of faith; or in some other mode, if there be other modes employed. But all are external, and not internal; there may be, or there may not be, internal exercises of mind. If any person has the heart and sagacity to enact the hypocrite well enough, he may get into any church in the world without any inward exercise at all. This is not necessarily present. The bond of union is external, and not internal.

Secondly, the state of privilege is altogether uncertain. Whether a person who is a member of one of these companies of disciples have any spiritual privilege, is altogether doubtful. He may, or he may not. He may find his church-

membership to be nothing but an ecclesiastical road to perdition.

And, thirdly, an equal uncertainty remains respecting the character of the members of these churches. It is plain that this must be the case, through the various degrees of rigidity or laxity shown in the reception of members. Some people are for taking into these churches whole nations, and must constitute them, therefore, in a very great part, of formalists and hypocrites. And even where there is as great care taken as may be consistent with Christian charity, there are yet found to be in them, now and then, persons of no religion; the appearance of religion passing away, "as the morning cloud and as the early dew." So that there is, and can be, no certainty respecting the character of those parties who become members of churches. Professors they certainly are; and of necessity, as a body, nothing more than professors.

Now, if these things be so, it is very plain that the current notions about *the church*, and its prerogatives, and powers, and privileges, are without scriptural warrant. We are told that the church, meaning thereby some Christian communion in this world, is a body which, if we join, we shall receive grace, and have spiritual privileges, and which if we do not join, either we cannot be saved, or our salvation is at all events very doubtful; that the church has the prerogative of giving and conferring grace, and authority to absolve from sin; that the clergymen, the ministers of it, are priests, and that the priests are armed with—I was going to say, the thunders and lightnings, but the words are too poor—armed with the terrors of the world to come, to be wielded (as they say) at the caprice, if not to satisfy the petty resentments, of poor puny mortals. I do not care to combat in detail these audacious and preposterous pretensions. What I say is, that these representations imply that there is existing a company upon earth to be called scripturally *the church*. Now I deny this assumption, and challenge proof of it. I affirm, on the contrary, that there is no body existing on earth, and never was one, scripturally to be called *the church*. It is the assumption of this point which is the basis of all the fallacies: the assumption that there is a body in this world so, and in such a sense to be called *the church*, that it shall have the privileges and characteristics of the catholic, the universal, church

—the whole multitude of the redeemed—the dead, the living, and the unborn. The prerogatives challenged for this thing that is called *the church*, this fiction of priestly imaginations, are those which belong to the church in its highest sense; and I say that a body entitled to them never did exist upon earth. There exist upon earth (scripturally) nothing but *churches*, companies of professed disciples of Jesus. No one will claim for either, or for all, of the separate companies of disciples the prerogatives that are claimed for *the church*; and let it only be understood that no such body exists, or can be conceived to exist, upon earth, as is entitled to the appellation of *the church*, and all these boasted prerogatives wither on the instant.

If it were said, “But the church was characterized by unity, authority, and prerogative, in the days of the Jewish church;” I have only to say that I am no believer in the Jewish church. I do not allow that the Jewish nation ever constituted the church of God, or ever was meant to constitute it. I believe that it was exclusively a nation in a state of secular relation to God, endowed with secular privileges; and that its constitution, history, and ritual, were absolutely and exclusively a mass of types and emblems, without a single spiritual element in the whole of them. A mass of types and emblems, I believe, all admit them to be; and I should like if some able men would try their hands at showing how emblems and types can be also spiritual realities. When any one will show me that the shadow and the substance are one and the same, I will give ear to what I now think the folly that is uttered about the Jewish church.

The conclusion of this discourse in a practical remark or two, will be as follows.

1. If it be as I have endeavoured to show, then we gather, in the first place, that no one has any reason to be afraid of the terrors fulminated against us for not belonging to the church. “Oh! you are Dissenters,” they say; “you do not belong to the church. Ah! you are upon the verge of perdition; it is very doubtful whether you will be saved.” No one has any reason to be afraid of such denunciations as these. Let them

——— “pass by you as the idle wind,
Which you regard not.”

Thank God that he has not bidden anybody to say such

terrible things as these. Be assured that it matters not at all whether you belong to any body upon earth that can be called, or that is called, *the church*. Believe in Jesus, repent of sin, take hold of God's promise; and you are as safe out of *the church*—any earthly church—as in it.

2. Then, in the second place, it follows that no valid or warrantable confidence can be placed in the saving influence of rites or sacraments. "Come into the church," they say to us; "baptism will confer the grace of regeneration; the sacrament"—which word, however, I abhor—"the sacrament of the Lord's supper will confer the grace of growth and nourishment." O! no: neither will baptism nor the Lord's supper convey any grace at all. The only instrument of union with THE CHURCH—the multitude of the redeemed—is something that shall unite us first of all with CHRIST, its Head. Believe in Jesus, take him as your Saviour; and that act, which unites you with him, unites you with all his. Confidence which is placed upon the grace-giving power of rites and ceremonies, is, I am deeply convinced, a fallacious and soul-destroying confidence.

3. But then, in the last place, there remains the deep necessity, the indispensable necessity, of personal and vital piety. Oh! I can see why it is that this doctrine of sacramental efficacy gains so many advocates. I can see why it is that this notion of a saving church is so popular. A saving church! I fancy so; it saves all people the trouble of repentance and a broken heart, and hence its popularity. Ay, it is far easier to be baptized, and to pamper the presumptuous priest who baptizes you, than it is to repent of sin, and to forsake the world. If Christ had preached as easy a Gospel as that, he would have had many more followers than ever he had. Come, dear friends: "the offence of the cross" is not yet ceased. But we are willing to bear it; and we say, as much for ourselves as for all who hear us—"Repent, and be converted;" for "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN PROMOTING THE
ORDER AND HAPPINESS OF THE FAMILIES
OF THE WORKING CLASSES.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—The object of this Lecture is to recommend to you religion. And very fitly, when such an object is announced to you, may you propose two questions:—First, What is the nature of religion? And, second, What are the considerations by which we wish to recommend it to you?

On the former of these questions I shall spend but very few words. It may be enough for me to say that, by religion, we do not understand a thing that consists in names, forms, ceremonies, or professions. We mean something that is in the heart, and influences the life. Religion, in our notion of it, comprehends repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and love to his blessed name; the weaning of the heart from the world, and devotedness to God's service. This is religion as represented in the Word of God. You have the Bible; look into it, and see if that be not the true character which is given of it there.

The considerations by which we desire to recommend religion to you are of two classes; the one class drawn from its obligation, and the other from its advantages. We could recommend to you religion because of its obligation. It is binding on us all. It is our duty, both yours and mine; our duty to God, required by him at our hands; and a solemn responsibility rests on us for a faithful fulfilment of our duty. It would be thus our duty even if there were no advantage in it; but, being our duty, it is also to our advantage.

The advantages resulting from religion are of two great classes: the one spiritual and eternal—these are its grand and primary advantages—the rescuing of our guilty souls from the curse and condemnation of God's law, and the wrath due to us for sin, obtaining pardon and peace through Christ Jesus, being adopted into his family and his love, and thus obtaining comfort in this world, and a blessed hope in relation to the next.

These are the grand and primary advantages of religion, but not its only ones. The next class of advantages is subordinate,

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and comprehends those which affect our condition in this world, personally, and in our domestic and social relations. These advantages, as compared with those I before mentioned, are very small, as time is small when compared with eternity; but even these, considered in themselves, will turn out to be of no inconceivable magnitude.

I come thus to the subject which is before us this evening; namely,—The Influence of Religion in promoting the Order and Happiness of Families.

I am to set before myself in imagination A FAMILY; not an individual, but a group; and a group consisting of two principal objects, the parents on the one side, and the children on the other. I imagine, then, that I see a family, consisting of both the parents, and of children of the various ages of childhood and youth. Now, clearly, family happiness is a very interesting and important subject; and, therefore, all the elements which are adapted to influence it, either for good or for evil, are entitled to our serious regard. In families we are so closely united, so continually one with another, placed in such immediate and constant association, that it is impossible to escape one from another, which we can to a great extent accomplish in social and ordinary life. Hence, if in the family we are not happy, we can scarcely be less than miserable. The family is a state designed and adapted by its author to yield many pleasures; but it requires a great deal of care and wisdom to secure felicity in it, and to prevent its perversion by our own corrupt passions into a source of utter wretchedness. The perversion of that which was intended to be a source of happiness into a spring of misery, would surely be a thing to be deeply regretted.

Now, I am by no means disposed to say that there are not many very well-conducted and respectable families where there is no religion; although it is to me very clear that, if, to any extent, a family can be happy without religion, they would be much more happy with it. We know, however, at the same time, that there are a great many causes which tend to mar and interrupt family happiness, and produce a great deal of domestic misery. I would not at all have it supposed that I am now going to speak of the state of things existing in your families whom I have the pleasure of addressing; but, scattered abroad in the world as you are, I dare say that I shall speak of things which you have seen, or, at least, have heard of, as existing elsewhere.

I am supposing, then, a family in which there is no religion, one in which the parents are without the fear of God, with children of various ages growing up in the same state around them. Now it is possible, in the first place, that there may be no great deal of kindness between the parents themselves; that, when they are together, there may be a sort of rough, rude, and uncourteous, behaviour manifested by both to each other, which

every now and then may acquire additional strength, and may be manifested by something approaching to brutality, it may be, on the part of the husband, who possesses the most powerful arm, and by something very provoking in return from the wife; and so domestic peace may be perpetually marred, and driven out at all the doors and windows of the house. There are, of course, just so many times of peace in relation to this matter, as there may be hours when husband and wife are not together; but in the evening the husband comes home—or might come, to cheer his waiting companion. Perhaps he does not come home, but spends his evenings at the public-house, or at the play-house, or, perhaps, at worse places still. Then he comes in late, perhaps very late, perhaps very rudely, perhaps half drunk, or perhaps quite drunk—poor harbinger of peace and happiness when he arrives!

Let us look at these parents, not only in the relation in which they stand to each other, but also in their relation to the children, who constitute so important a part of the family. The first thing is to provide for their secular wants—bread to feed them, and clothing to cover them. Perhaps the father's wages are but small, and scarcely sufficient for this purpose, even when in constant work; what necessity, then, for frugality and thrift! There is, however, no guarantee for its practice. The husband will not, perhaps, let the wife have the whole of his weekly wages, but insists on keeping a considerable portion to himself, to spend upon his drink; and, perhaps, if the wife had the whole of the money she would not find it enough, but would get into debt in spite of it. These are habits which would make, and keep, any family poor, and wretched. Some people will do better upon ten shillings a week than others will upon forty.

Look next upon the kind of tempers likely to be manifested towards the children. I know very well that mothers fondle their babes while they are babes, and so do the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, their offspring; but some mothers treat their children, at a very early age, worse than any brute would treat its young, and fathers are, of course, less remarkable for tenderness than mothers. This conduct on the part of parents, while it is very expressive of their own want of self-government, is also productive of much mischief in the minds of the children. They grow up in similar habits, and manifest similar tempers. At an early age they will not mind what is said to them; at first they yield no obedience to the mother, then none to the father, and then the older they grow the worse they become. It is not to be expected that parents who know not how to govern themselves can know how to govern their children; if they had the heart to apply themselves to the business they would not succeed, until they had wisdom and resolution enough to govern themselves. The proper manner, and the proper spirit, in which to correct

their children they are strangers to; and, rather than trouble themselves to acquire the necessary skill, they give up the task, and let their children grow up carelessly, and in disorder. Such a family, instead of being a pleasure and gratification to their parents, is a fruitful source of continual vexation. In the quarrels which spring up the father and mother probably take different sides, the one excusing or fondling those whom the other has been rebuking or punishing. At length the children become great boys and girls, and go out to service; then one runs away from his master, another commences the habit of pilfering, a third goes off to sea, another enlists in the army; while the girls, unable to keep the places they are sent to, may become the prey of the wicked in ways that I will not imagine. Such is the possible course and issue of domestic life; its miseries of early appearance, constant in their growth, and heart-breaking in their consummation.

God knows my heart, that I wish to put nothing unreal into this picture, and that the less there really is of this sort of misery in the world the more I shall rejoice; but such things do nevertheless exist, and worse things than these will readily occur to your thoughts. The depraved heart of man, naturally prone to sin, is urged on to its commission by the prince of darkness, who uses all his efforts to destroy the temporal, as well as the spiritual, welfare of mankind.

Let us now look at a family in which religion exists, and in which not one only, but both the parents are pious. It is a very great mercy if one be pious, both for himself and the family; but it is proper in this case, and to the making out of my argument, that I should take an instance in which both are pious.

Observe, then, in the first place, what a security this is for the maintenance of conjugal love. Genuine conjugal affection is best nurtured and maintained by religion. This will teach parents the privileges and duties of the conjugal state, and impart to them an earnest desire to realize and fulfil them towards one another. It will lead them to act as fellow-heirs of the grace of God, and of eternal life. There will thus be a security for love between husband and wife, and for love of a kind that will bear the wear and tear of this world; that will withstand all influences tending to its extinction; that will extend, not only over all the sunny days of life, but also over all its gloomy, cloudy, and tempestuous, days; that will maintain its vigour from youth to life's meridian; and come whole and unbroken to old age, warming the feeblest pulsations of the heart, and irradiating the wrinkled and the furrowed cheek. Is not this a triumph for religion? O, my friends, what a sweet element that must be which will unite husbands and wives in a bond of imperishable love, and enable them every day of their lives to bless the hour that made them one!

In the next place, look at the influence of religion in teaching parents the art of self-government, and helping them to control their own tempers. It is a proverb, and I think the title of a tract which I have seen, that "Temper is Everything." It is a great thing, at all events. The happiness of life in our most intimate associations, even in professedly pious families, is often marred by it, and it is a great thing to say that religion, if truly received into the heart, will enable us to control and subdue it. Many men are irascible, too ready to be in a passion, and to say harsh things; and these to one who is, perhaps, tenderly affectionate to him, and to whose heart every unkind word is like a dagger. Religion will teach such men the use of kind and gentle words, and make them hold back those cutting terms which enter where daggers could never have found their way. O how needful it is to arrest the current of angry words at once! for in this matter one word brings another. Religion should make people remember and act upon the scriptural advice, to leave strife alone before it is meddled with. The great wisdom is to avoid the beginning. Turn away, forget it. "A soft answer turneth away wrath." This curbing of the temper and the tongue ministers vastly to the peace and happiness of life. The effect of bad temper is not confined to the moment; it may, perhaps, be several days, or weeks, before those who have quarrelled can become kind again; and then, when they desire it, they do not know how to begin. One does not like to make an apology, and the other does not like to do it; and, at last, the whole affair has to be forgiven and forgotten; but not until it has cost them some miserable days, and many hard struggles, when a little curbing of the temper and the tongue would have prevented it all.

Further; as the government of the temper ministers very much to the happiness, so it greatly assists in the performance of the duties, of domestic life. In general life people have proverbially a will of their own; but, really, husbands and wives can scarcely be said to be fit to come together, till they have learned to find more pleasure in giving up their own will than in enforcing it. Religion greatly helps this.

In domestic life very much requires to be done by consultation, and in concert: but, if there be a determination on the part of both to have each their own way, there is scarcely a possibility of consultation, and, when the attempt is made, it is almost sure to end in wider disagreement. Indeed, without a spirit of mutual accommodation, how can the anxious, and often perplexed, affairs of domestic life be conducted in peace?

The pain inflicted by unkindnesses of the temper and the tongue is often aggravated by their being manifested in the presence of others, and especially of the children. How often is there occasion for one parent to say to the other, after some unkind retort—"You should not have said that before the children"! Such

ebullitions impair the respect in which each parent ought to teach the children to hold the other, and set an evil example, which is but too likely to be promptly imitated. It is, indeed, one of the great advantages of an habitual government of the temper on the part of parents, that they thus avoid setting an injurious example to their children. The young are prompt imitators, especially of that which is evil, or indiscreet; and no examples are presented to them with so much constancy, or with so much power, as those of their parents. With little justice, indeed, can parents complain, when they see reflected in a naughty and trying child the image of themselves. Can any but parents who habitually govern their own tempers reasonably expect to have children that can govern theirs?

We may now consider religion in its influence on the practical conduct of a family. It will bring both parents into a wise and economical management of their affairs. Under its influence, it will become a study with them to make both ends meet, and, if possible, out of the little that they have, to lay by something against a rainy day; and, when there is a unity of aim and a combination of effort, small doubt need be entertained of a happy result.

Religion will likewise make parents considerate of the duties which they owe to their offspring. They will not wish to be indulging themselves with gratifications of any kind at the expense of their children, but will consider that their families stand first in the list of their earthly duties. They will have one sentiment of interest in their children which other parents have not; they will feel that they have children born for eternity, and, as it may prove, for heaven, for Christ, for his love, and for his service. They will cherish hope, even in the period of infancy, and will seek, as the mind unfolds, to direct it to spiritual and holy objects and pursuits. In all this there is a deep and thrilling interest which parents who are not pious never have, and never can have.

And then, with a view to the attainment of the object before them, they will perseveringly maintain a well-ordered house. There will be, for example, the husband seeking the comfort of his wife and children; the wife maintaining the neatness and cleanliness of the house; the children's clothing will be neat, although it may be nearly threadbare, and it will be wholesome, although it may be mean; while in the mother's own person, also, the same neatness and cleanliness will be apparent. There will be no rude terms, nor cuffs, to make the children do right; for all will have been accustomed from infancy to render cheerful obedience to a word, and even to a gesture. The law of the house will be, not force, but love. The mother, especially, will employ her constant assiduity and tenderness to establish in the hearts of her offspring a dominion which is given to her alone, of all on

earth—the mysterious, but most powerful and beneficent, dominion of maternal love, the like to which there is not, except in the love of God. This influence will be felt most by the girls, but the boys will feel it too; and of infinite importance will it be to them as they grow up, for it will do for them what the muscle of a father's arm can never do. Love is more persuasive than blows.

There is, of course, in domestic life, sometimes a necessity for chastisement. For my part, I do not believe in any system of discipline which shall entirely supersede corporal punishment: and I am sure Solomon did not, when he said, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." There is immense importance, however, in the manner and spirit in which chastisement is applied. Chastisement not justly deserved, or, when deserved, not suitably administered, will do harm instead of good. There may be cases, on the one hand, in which more is inflicted than is deserved, and in which the punishment exhibits rather the amount of a parent's anger than the measure of a child's fault; and there may be cases, on the other hand, in which a justly proportioned punishment may be administered in a spirit of resentment, rather for the venting of a parent's feelings than for the correction of the offending child. Religion will teach parents how to proportion punishment, and in what spirit to administer it. Considerate parents will never chastise a child while they are angry, but will let their anger pass away, and then, in the fear of God, and with melting kindness, administer such punishment as the case may demand. This is the only method that can make parental chastisement answer the purpose for which it is designed.

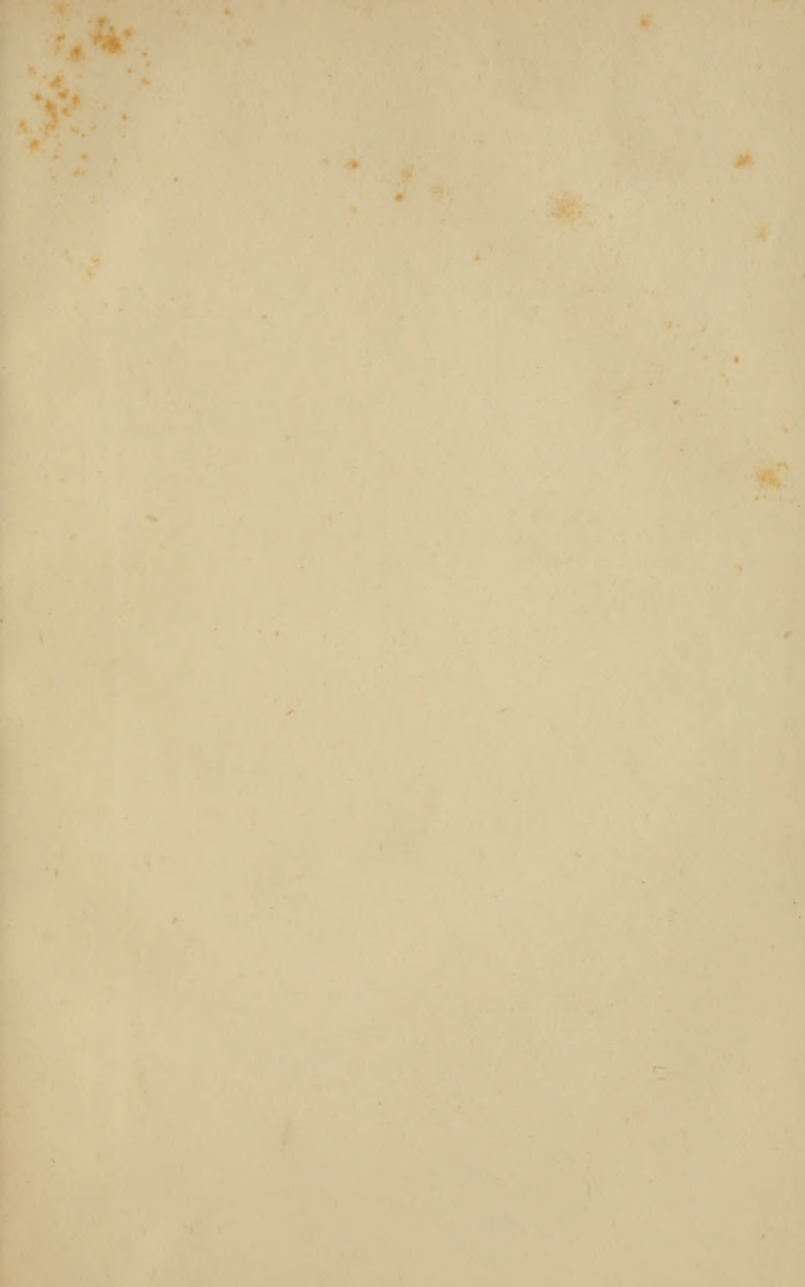
Again, when children are grown up, and fit to be put to service or a trade, religion affords its invaluable aid. It teaches parents to look out for situations in which proper care will be taken, both of the comfort and the morals of children; and the children having been trained to virtuous and industrious habits, they find that persons in respectable businesses will more readily employ them than children less carefully educated.

Of the greatest blessing of all, however, among those which religion is adapted to confer upon a family, I have yet to speak. It is the hope which may be entertained, through God's mercy and blessing, that, where there are pious and consistent parents, there may also be pious children. O! if parents are favoured to see their own children become pious, what a felicity is that! I see no reason why children may not be pious, at least as early as they may be wicked. Why we should not have pious children at four or five years of age, or, at least, at six or seven, I do not know. Such things there have been, and would to God they were much more frequent! If there were more prayers and efforts directed to this end, there might be more of them. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy

that it cannot hear." But suppose that only one of the children of a family becomes pious, what an example is thus set before the other children ! What an influence for good is thus exerted upon them continually ! One of their own age becoming pious in the midst of them, is calculated to produce the most blessed effects upon them all. If, however, not one only, but several, and especially if all the children, as they grow up, learn to love the Lord, what an unspeakable happiness is this ! What an unutterable felicity is in the thought for parents, that their union with their children is not only for time, but for eternity also. Such parents can say, "God gave us these children, and we shall possess them for ever. They are a blessing to us while here below ; if we should live to be old they will solace and comfort us, and they will be our treasure in another world. Death, indeed, will separate us ; but, whichever goes first, we or they, it matters not, for we are linked together by imperishable ties."

Dear friends, these are some of the considerations by which we feel ourselves warranted in recommending to you religion. There are many other reasons why you should regard it ; but, if there were no other motives to urge, you should cultivate it for these. Every father, mother, and child, who desires domestic happiness should yield the heart to God. The primary benefits of religion are infinitely greater than these ; but, even in this secondary sphere of its influence, it scatters blessings inestimable, without which this world would be as sad a scene of misery and disorder as sin and Satan could make it.

These, dear friends, are the few remarks which I have thought well to make to you ; and I hope they will be received in the spirit in which they are given, with kindness and candour. I trust that God has given me to taste and feel some of the blessed effects of religion in my own family, and I pray that you all may enjoy them in a much greater degree in your own. Amen.



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